Senators say 2 PAOCTF agents hiding truth

STORY ON PAGE A2

General's son, 11, held for bombing

By Stella O. Gonzales

THE 11-YEAR-OLD son of a police general who once served under former President Fidel Ramos became the innocent victim of authorities desperate to come up with a suspect in the Dec. 30 bomb explosion outside the Dusit Hotel.

GENERAL'S/ A12

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2001 ★★ 28 PAGES 3 SECTIONS VOL.16 NO. 27 ₱15

Erap sees business, bank in 'conspiracy'

By Donna Cueto and Rocky Nazareno

THERE'S a "conspiracy" masterminded by his opponents led by the Makati Business Club and the Equitable PCI Bank, President Estrada said yesterday.

The President was reacting to the testimony of the prosecution's surprise witness, Clarissa

ERAP/ A11

Ocampo: Bank had no part in cover-up

But she didn't say why documents were antedated

Crizele was 'the joy of the entire Acusin clan'

By Christian V. Esguerra

PRETTY 6-year-old Crizele Acusin was excited. Her mother's relatives were taking her to Malabon to spend New Year's Eve with her parents, whom she usually saw only on weekends. She asked her Uncle Sixto to dress her in her favorite blue frock for the trip.

It was the dress she died in.

Crizele, killed instantly by the senseless blast that ripped through a Light Rail Transit train on Saturday, was cremated yesterday at the Chinese Cemetery in Manila.

Her mother, Angela, 36, fainted when she saw her daughter's still form in a casket at their Malabon residence before the coffin was brought to the cemetery.

"The mother could not bear the sight. She broke into tears and passed out for the next several hours. She lost her baby girl," Crizele's grandmother, Nida Espera, said.

"She was the joy of the entire clan. She was our little girl, our baby who always brought happiness to the family," Nida said of the child whose photo appeared on the front page of the INQUIRER on Sunday. In the picture, a rescuer carried Crizele's lifeless, blood-

CRIZELE/ A12

THIS was the blood-soaked girl from the LRT blast that appeared on Page 1 of the INQUIRER last Sunday. Her name was Crizele Acusin, 6. She was cremated yesterday.

NO ATTEMPT at a cover-up?

Two Equitable PCI Bank officials yesterday took exception to news reports that the bank had participated in an attempt to hide President Estrada's alleged ownership of a P500-million trust account under the name of Jose Velarde.

Clarissa G. Ocampo, the bank's senior vice president and trust officer, said the planned transfer of the P500-million trust account to presidential friend and businessman Jaime Dichaves was legal and "a routine business transaction."

Georgo L. Go, former Equitable PCI Bank chair, made the same claim in a separate press statement.

Ocampo said she didn't know what the motive of Dichaves was when he asked Go, who was the bank chair then, that the trust account be transferred to his name last Dec. 13.

But Ocampo and Go did not explain in their press statements why the documents effecting the transfer of the trust account to Dichaves were to be antedated to Feb. 4, 2000.

In her testimony last Dec. 22, Ocampo testified that it was on Feb. 4, 2000 when she saw the President affix the signature "Jose Vèlarde" on several bank documents related to the P500-million trust account.

House prosecutors in the Senate impeachment trial are using the Equitable PCI Bank account as evidence that Mr. Estrada committed graft and corruption by acquiring ill-gotten wealth to fund a lavish lifestyle for himself and his mistresses.

"The fact that the bank did not consummate the transaction because of lack of legal requirements proves that the bank did not participate in any cover-up," Ocampo said in a press statement.

When she resumed her testimony at the Senate impeachment trial on Tuesday, Ocampo said Go directed her last month to prepare the documents transferring the account to Dichaves.

Ocampo said Dichaves signed the documents on Dec. 13 at the office of defense lawyer Estelito Mendoza.

But Dichaves never submitted the letter-authority from the owner of the trust account to the bank's trust department, Ocampo said. Hence, the transfer fell through.

"I cannot speak for Mr. Dichaves as to his motives . . . (but) Equitable PCI Bank did not and will never participate in any cover-up and we will never allow anything that is not legal," Ocampo said in her statement.

OCAMPO/ A11

Chavit grilled for 5½ hours

By Juliet L. Javellana, Martin P. Marfil and Rocky Nazareno

Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson yesterday reiterated during a cross-examination that President Estrada received P390.3 million out of the P542.5-million "jueteng" protection money collected over a 21-month period until August last year.

In trying to debunk Singson's claim, defense lawyer Estelito Mendoza spent five-and-a-half hours scrutinizing the prosecution star witness' affidavits and his 22-page ledger listing the monthly collections from various provinces.

Singson testified anew that A.S. or Asiong Salonga, which is the President's code name, received P5 million in jueteng money every 15 days.

At times losing his cool, Singson complained that Mendoza was deliberately trying to

CHAVIT/ A11

Estrada hid ₱2B in banks, says Joker

AS MUCH as P2 billion was hidden by President Estrada in several bank accounts, Prosecutor-Rep. Joker Arroyo yesterday said.

"We will prove that he has P2 billion and this is ill-gotten," Arroyo said in a local radio interview.

The prosecution earlier claimed that the President secretly kept about P1.2 billion in Equitable PCI Bank, allegedly proceeds from illegal activities.

The President also maintained an account with Allied Bank under

ESTRADA/ A11

Lacson: We will get those bastards

By Dave M. Veridiano, Norman Bordadora and Jerome Aning

"REST assured, we'll get those bastards."

Breaking his silence over last week's bombings in Metro Manila, the chief of the Philippine National Police said he expected to arrest suspects in the next two days.

Director General Panfilo Lacson also cleared the government and the legal opposition of involvement in the spate of attacks that killed 18 and injured almost 100 more, pointing to a foreign-trained terrorist group that he did not name.

He also admitted that the PNP had received advance intelligence reports warning about bombings in the Metro but "did not announce it publicly because it was the holiday season and we did not want unnecessarily to alarm the people."

"We have identified the group and even personalities involved. We are now hot on the trail. We have established their identities through physical evidence gathered in the explosion sites. So it's just a matter of one or two days before we come up with arrests," Lacson told reporters after several days of evading persistent journalists.

LACSON/ A12

THE PRESIDENT condoles with Susima Salvador and SPO4 Diana Gutierrez, widows of Insp. Nestor Salvador and SPO4 Roberto Gutierrez who were killed while defusing a bomb in Makati. ROMY HOMILLADA

EMMANUEL, the boy who lost a leg in the LRT blast, may have also lost his parents as they have not come for him. REUTERS

Images of blast victims raising donations, anger

LITTLE Emmanuel can't remember his age, his address or his mom's name.

But the toddler does remember that—before bombers ripped through Metro Manila with five synchronized terror attacks Saturday—he had two legs.

Stunned and possibly orphaned far from home, he's now asking doctors to get his right leg back.

The preschooler, skin burnt an angry red on half his body, has become the most potent symbol of the horror that has gripped the metropolis since the bombs blasted a park, train, bus, gas station and airport here Saturday.

Civil defense authorities raised the death toll to 18 Wednesday after a 24-year-old pregnant

IMAGES/ A12

Defense questions Singson's credibility

By Raul J. Palabrica

ANALYSIS

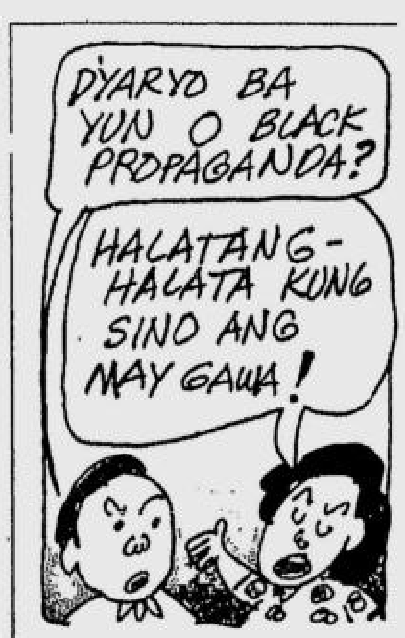
LIVING up to its earlier pronouncements, the defense yesterday focused its cross-examination of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis Singson on the acts of falsification he allegedly committed in regard to the disposition of provincial funds.

Lawyer Estelito Mendoza used a "folksy" approach in questioning Singson. Friendly and non-confrontational. An approach meant to keep the witness at ease, hoping to catch him commit a mistake during an unguarded moment.

Mendoza treaded carefully in asking Singson details about the listings on jueteng collections that he said he prepared for the benefit of President Estrada.

The lessons of the disastrous cross-examination of Emma Lim appear to have been learned well by the defense. Most of the questions posed on Singson were answerable by either "yes" or "no." The prosecution's star witness had little opportunity to add details to the points he testified on direct examination.

DEFENSE/ A11



DYARYO BA YUN O BLACK PROPAGANDA?
HALATANG-HALATA KUNG SINO ANG MAY GAWA!

Pro-Erap tabloid slams Chavit, Gloria

By Martin P. Marfil and Armand N. Nocum

ON the same day President Estrada's defense lawyers grilled Luis "Chavit" Singson, a new tabloid hit the streets yesterday detailing the Ilocos Sur governor's alleged wrongdoings.

The tabloid, named Pinoy Exposé, carried the screaming headline: "*Singson, Halang*

PRO-ERAP/ A12

Second FRONT PAGE

SECRET ANG EQUIPMENT KASI SA MGA SECRET ITO GINAGAMIT !

Senators say 2 'spooks' hiding truth

BY JULIET LABOG-JAVELLANA

SENATORS yesterday expressed some irritation with two officers who repeatedly refused to reveal details of their surveillance equipment at a special hearing into allegations that officials involved in President Estrada's impeachment trial were being spied on.

"I do not believe you are telling us the truth here, the full truth as we are entitled to know as an impeachment court," Senate President Aquilino Pimentel told Chief Insp. Milo Pagtalunan, officer in charge of the finance and logistics division of the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force.

"They are indeed withholding information from us," said Sen. Franklin Drilon.

Pagtalunan and Lt. Col. Dioscoro Reyes, on detail with the PAOCTF as chief of the technical support division, were testifying at a parallel investigation being conducted by the impeachment court on a Dec. 18, INQUIRER report that some 100 individuals, including senator-judges and prosecutors, were being monitored by the PAOCTF based on billing records of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

The PAOCTF had submitted a confidential list of its surveillance equipment as ordered by the impeachment court, but refused to discuss the capability of such equipment on grounds of national security.

The senators and Chief Justice Hilario Davide, presiding officer of the impeachment court, agreed yesterday to reconvene in a closed executive session to hear the two officers' explanations.

Pagtalunan evaded questions on what surveillance equipment were in the PAOCTF inventory, how much they were worth and what their functions were.

Senate Minority Leader Teofisto Guingona Jr. asked if the PAOCTF had realigned P200 million from the Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police to buy surveillance equipment, including those capable of intercepting cellular telephone transmissions.

REYES

JESS YUSON

PAGTALUNAN

Pagtalunan explained that half of the PAOCTF's P120 million budget for last year was for intelligence operations, and the other half for maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE).

He said the surveillance equipment had been bought using the MOOE, which prompted Drilon to ask if it was the usual practice of the PAOCTF to realign these funds to buy surveillance equipment.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon demanded that Pagtalunan read out every piece of equipment contained in the PAOCTF list.

But Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile objected, saying the police officer could not be compelled to divulge documents classified as secret.

Davide cautioned the senator-judges and the witnesses from publicly disclosing the document, which had been marked "secret."

Sen. Juan Flavier asked: "I have a telephone. Can you actually bug it without connecting to my line?"

Flavier said that being a layman, he wanted to confirm reports that phone conversations or even conversations inside a room in a house could be listened to "by authorities" using "parabolic means."

"I don't have any idea about that matter," Pagtalunan said.

Reyes, who was supposed to be the expert, repeatedly invoked national security when asked detailed questions about the surveillance equipment.

At one point, Reyes said Mr. Estrada "may go" if convicted by the impeachment court, but national security had to be protected at all times.

Asked by Guingona if the PAOCTF has or had plans to acquire a GA 900, said to be a high-tech equipment capable of intercepting landline and cellular transmissions, Reyes said the equipment had not been bought yet.

Reyes confirmed he went to Germany to buy the equipment, but that when it was tested here, it was not suited to Philippine conditions.

He said the manufacturers of the GA 900, which is sold only to governments, did not want the cost and the capability of the system to be publicly disclosed.

Drilon said he intended to make an objection to the invocation of national security and push for the public disclosure of the capability of the PAOCTF's surveillance equipment.

"Given the broad definition of national security, they can justify anything as covered by national security," Drilon told reporters.

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Pardo named chair of ECC

BY CLARISSA S. BATINO AND ARMAND N. NOCUM

PRESIDENT Estrada yesterday named Finance Secretary Jose Pardo chair of the Economic Coordinating Council (ECC), in his place.

Acting Press Secretary Michael Toledo said that by turning over his post to Pardo, the President would have more time to make trips to the provinces and act on other pressing concerns.

"That will be the change as far as the ECC is concerned," Toledo said of the body assigned to assess current economic conditions in order to formulate relevant policies to sustain the country's growth and development.

Pardo said Mr. Estrada would serve as chair emeritus of the ECC, but would not have voting power.

Meanwhile, Pardo said Malacañang was considering a "third formula" in the ongoing search for a new executive secretary to replace Ronaldo Zamora.

He said the option was not to appoint an individual but a "support group" that would handle the tasks of the "little President."

The other option is the appointment of either Agriculture Secretary Edgardo Angara or Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno.

Angara and Diokno are both members of the ECC. The other members include Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Felipe Medalla, the executive secretary, housing chief Lenny de Jesus and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

The trade secretary is also included in the eight-member group that used to include Mr. Estrada. Pardo used to be the ECC vice chair, and Margarito Teves, president of the Land Bank of the Philippines, the secretary general.

"The powers of the ECC will be increased to make it a more effective organization," Pardo said.

'OFFICIAL TOWN CRIER'

Maceda gets it from all sides

BY ANDREA TRINIDAD-ECHAVEZ AND TJ BURGONIO

OUTGOING Ambassador to the United States Ernesto Maceda, President Estrada's spokesperson on matters involving the impeachment trial, is getting it from all sides.

Militant groups yesterday assailed Maceda for saying that the President could not have had a role in the Dec. 30 bombings because of his supposed mental handicap.

"Mr. Maceda projects President Estrada like a wrongly accused guy and (too) brainless to stage the bombings. Let him savor his own holograph and project its image in the air," party list group Bayan Muna said in a statement.

The group said that contrary to Maceda's claim, Mr. Estrada had "enough brains" to orchestrate the bombings.

Bayan Muna chair Satur Ocampo said Mr. Estrada "learned a lot during (Ferdinand) Marcos' tenure as dictator.

"More importantly, he has the heart of a gangster-fascist capable of splitting warm bodies into pieces," said Ocampo, a martial law veteran.

Skepticism

In its own statement, the militant fisherfolk group Pamalakaya said the Estrada administration could not blame the public for being skeptical to the outcome of the investigation conducted by "officers loyal" to the President.

"The Estrada administration has assumed all roles. It is the most likely perpetrator, the investigator, the judge and the executioner. In the soonest possible time, the Palace will just file this case on a dusty back shelf, with its usual fall guys saving the day for the presidency," Pamalakaya said.

Its national chair, Rodolfo Sambajon, said he was not surprised to hear Maceda absolving the President of any involvement in the bombings

Sambajon pointed out that Maceda was "Malacanang's official town crier."

"But just the same, his announcement was enough to send chills down our spines," Sambajon said.

US experts

Prosecutor-Rep. Wigberto Tañada also chided Maceda for announcing the supposed arrival of US "anti-terrorist" experts to help in the investigation of the bombing attacks that have so far killed 18 persons.

Tanada said Maceda's announcement, which has since been denied by the US Embassy in Manila, "has only hampered the conduct of the investigation."

Asked whether he shared the perception of some quarters that Maceda's appointment as the President's spokesperson on the impeachment trial was only causing further damage, Tanada refused to comment.

But he burst into a big laugh.

Flat denial

At the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, former President Fidel Ramos flatly denied Maceda's allegation that he had a hand in the bombings.

Ramos scored Maceda, Acting Press Secretary Mike Toledo and Mr. Estrada's son JV Ejercito for issuing "empty prognostications" on the possible masterminds, as well as the chiefs of the military and police for failing to come up with a report on the attacks.

"As ex-presidents, and I'm also speaking for ex-president Cory Aquino, we'll be the last persons to want any damage to or deterioration of public safety and people's well-being," Ramos told reporters prior to his departure for Thailand.

"We're the first ones who will want a solution to his problem so that this continuing threat to our well-being will be stopped," Ramos added.

The ex-president left for Bangkok to accept an honorary degree in development science from the Khon Kaen University.

Earlier, Maceda said authorities were not ruling out the involvement in the bombings of ultra-rightist groups, Ramos and former security adviser Jose Almonte, who, he said, had warned of a people's revolt if Mr. Estrada did not resign by yearend.

National issue

"Are they all of a sudden Sherlock Holmes, Madame Auring and Chief Justice Hilario Davide all rolled into one, who can announce judgment because they have the solution to this heinous crime?" Ramos said.

He added: "If it were so, then any of the three of them should replace (Philippine National Police Director General Panfilo) Ping Lacson because they're better investigators than Lacson."

Ramos criticized Lacson and Armed Forces chief Gen. Angelo Reyes for not coming out in public to report on the results of their investigation.

"In instances like this, the chiefs of the PNP and the AFP must come out to make a report. This is national and international in scope," he said. ***With a report from Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau***

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

ANNOUNCEMENT

At about noon on December 30, 2000, a bomb exploded in one of the trains of the LRT Line 1 System seconds before it came to a full stop at the Blumentritt Station. Up to this time, the instigators of this horrendous activity, which have caused the lives of, and injuries to, innocent passengers, have not yet been identified. However, diligent efforts are being exerted by our combined military and police forces to resolve the matter at the soonest possible time.

As we sincerely sympathize with all those who have lost a loved one or who, one way or the other, have suffered as a result of this terrible incident, we would also like to inform all concerned that the LRTA has provided for a Passenger Accident Insurance/Liability with the GSIS for all passengers of the LRT Line 1 System.

In this connection, relatives of victims of this tragic incident who, up to this moment, have not yet been reached by LRTA representatives to provide the much needed assistance, are requested to get in touch immediately with:

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LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
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locals 8421 and 8313-14

We would also like to take this opportunity to appeal to our people for sobriety and calmness amidst all these adversities. Rest assured that we are doing our very best to ensure the continued safety of the thousands of our passengers who take the LRT to their various places of destination daily.

ANTONIO C. SAN LUIS
Administrator

Comelec says no extension of voter registration period

BY GERALD G. LACUARTA

THE COMMISSION on Elections will not extend the period of registration for new voters, which ended on Dec. 27, despite the low turnout of registrants.

A one-day special registration, however, will be held in Panamao town, Sulu, on Jan. 9 because of reports that Mayor Mhadji Bassar Abdurajak hoarded at least 8,000 blank registration forms which were allegedly filled up by his supporters.

Abdurajak belongs to the Lakas-NUCD party. The town has 45,000 registered voters.

The National Movement for Free Elections had sought an 11-day extension of the registration period, saying that not all new voters were able to register because the Comelec failed to conduct a comprehensive information campaign.

Official reports of the turnout in Metro Manila showed a 1.68 percent increase in the number of voters since the May 1998 elections, from 5.15 million to 5.21 million, for a total of 60,000 new registrants.

Namfrel had said in seeking an extension that it expected at least 480,000 first-time voters to register in Metro Manila alone, had they been properly informed by the Comelec.

Comelec chair Harriet Demetriou said the agency was still waiting for the results of the registration in the provinces. The total number of registered voters nationwide was 34.5 million in the 1998 elections.

Yesterday, a 40-year-old singer-composer nicknamed "Groovy" became the first person to file a certificate of candidacy for the May 14 polls, two days after the election period officially began.

Daniel Ronquillo Magtira of Tondo, Manila, and Tugatog, Malabon, submitted his certificate of candidacy for senator at the Comelec offices at around 1:20 p.m.

Demetriou said most candidates were expected to file their certificates at the last minute because they would have to resign from their posts if they were government officials.

The records showed that Magtira listed his occupation as a "singer/composer" for the New Horoscope Band, and that he was running as an independent.

He also wrote down his nickname as "Groovy," which voters may write down in lieu of his real name, if his candidacy is approved by the poll body.

The election period officially began on Jan. 2, the first day of filing of certificates of candidacies for those wishing to run in the May polls. The deadline is Feb. 12.

For the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, however, the period will be shorter, from Jan. 2 to 14.

DFA concerned about Indon warning to Pinoy fishermen

BY DONA PAZZIBUGAN

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs has expressed serious concern over a recent pronouncement by the Indonesian Navy that Filipino fishermen caught fishing in Indonesian waters would be dealt with forcefully.

Foreign Undersecretary Benjamin Domingo said that while Indonesia may have been only acting to secure its territory, such an order would endanger many Filipino fishermen from Mindanao who may unknowingly cross into Indonesian waters.

DFA officials have said that Filipino fishermen find it difficult to differentiate between Philippine and Indonesian waters because of overlapping sea borders.

"There might be an untoward incident in the future because of the regular occurrence (of Filipino fishermen entering Indonesian waters). (From here on) further intrusion will be met with force. The fishermen can be fired at anytime," Domingo said.

He said the Philippine consulate in Manado was concerned over Indonesia's new iron-fist policy against foreign fishermen, who illegally enter Indonesian waters.

The consulate, however, has not reported any incidents of violent confrontation between Filipino fishermen and the Indonesian Navy since the order was issued.

But the consulate noted that the number of Filipino fishermen who have been arrested and later repatriated by Indonesian authorities for illegal fishing has increased in recent months, according to Domingo.

He did not give any figures, however.

Domingo said a team led by Manado-based Consul General Reynaldo Martinez was on its way to General Santos City to warn fishing communities there of the stricter measures adopted by the Indonesian Navy against foreign intrusion.

Domingo said the DFA was not yet filing a diplomatic protest and was only warning Filipino fishermen against venturing too far out to sea lest they wander into Indonesian territory.

Rights victims will focus on Arelma fund

BY BLANCHE S. RIVERA

THE VICTIMS of human rights abuse during martial law have decided against forging a new compromise deal with the heirs of dictator Ferdinand Marcos on the payment of the $2.9-billion compensation awarded them by a US court.

Lawyer Rod Domingo Jr. yesterday said the 9,539 rights claimants would instead concentrate on gathering evidence that would secure the $35-million Arelma assets in the custody of the US District Court of Hawaii as partial payment to them within the year.

Domingo said he would look through the records of the Sandiganbayan to find documents that would prove that the Marcoses had admitted owning the Arelma account.

The New York-based brokerage firm Merrill Lynch Inc. handled the account until it was ordered transferred to the Hawaii court.

"We're concentrating on that right now, not on the compromise agreement," Domingo told the INQUIRER. "We have a bigger chance of getting the entire Arelma assets this year than getting something out of a new agreement."

Domingo said the claimants were banking on getting the $35 million from the Arelma account to initially satisfy the compensation due them.

The claimants won a class suit against the Marcoses in Hawaii in 1995. The original amount awarded, $1.9 billion, has ballooned to $2.9 billion.

US Judge Manuel Real recently terminated the $150-million settlement between the claimants and the Marcos heirs because of the latter's failure to pay the former a single cent.

The claimants sought the cancellation of the compromise agreement in 1999.

Domingo earlier said that a representative of the Marcoses had broached to the claimants the idea of a new deal, to which the dictator's widow, Imelda Marcos, was said to be amenable.

"It's really difficult to rely on the Marcoses, so we're letting that (compromise agreement) go at this time," Domingo said.

Dante Tan barred from going abroad

By D.Pazzibugan

A PASIG court yesterday denied the request of businessman Dante Tan, a friend of President Estrada, to travel abroad before his scheduled arraignment in the BW Resources stock manipulation case.

Tan, president of BW Resources Corp., was prevented from traveling by Judge Briccio Ygaña, of Pasig Regional Trial Court Branch 153, who said Tan could not leave the country until after his arraignment on Jan. 16.

In a two-page order, Ygaña said Tan should wait until then before asking the court for permission to travel.

He said the court had not yet acquired jurisdiction over Tan since he had not been arraigned.

Tan and his co-accused, BW officials Jimmy Juan and Eduardo Lim Jr., have posted bail. Their lawyers said the posting of bail was implied recognition of the court's jurisdiction over the case.

Tan, Juan and Lim have been charged by government prosecutors with manipulating the share price of BW Resources, a gaming firm, in October 1999, in what appeared to be the biggest instance of stock manipulation in the country's history.

Tan had asked the court to allow him to travel to attend to "business meetings abroad."

The prosecutors said Tan should not be allowed to leave the country because the BW scandal and the President's alleged order to former Securities and Exchange Commission chair Perfecto Yasay to exonerate Tan were included in the charges against Mr. Estrada in his Senate impeachment trial.

Malaysian writing book on hostage crisis

KUALA LUMPUR—A well-connected Malaysian businessman who helped negotiate the release of hostages held by the Abu Sayyaf said yesterday that he was writing a book that would "expose the secrets and lies" surrounding the crisis.

Yusof Hamdan, 50, claimed that he had made secret tape recordings of conversations showing that some Philippine government officials had deliberately hampered negotiations and tried to hog a percentage of ransom money for themselves.

He said the Abu Sayyaf, which reportedly received $15 million in ransom for 20 of 21 mostly foreign hostages kidnapped in April from Malaysia's Sipadan resort, was initially more interested in highlighting its rebellion than receiving ransom.

"This book will hit out at the real bad guys who manipulated the situation for their own benefit," Yusof said in a phone interview. "It will expose the secrets and lies behind the negotiations."

He refused to immediately name the Philippine officials whom he accused of wrongdoing.

He said that his book, tentatively titled "The Truth Behind Sipadan," was 50-percent ready, and that he was in final negotiations with a US-based firm to publish it.

Yusof denied he was trying to capitalize on widespread interest by writing the book, which he hoped would be ready by March.

He also said he did not think the book would hurt ties between Kuala Lumpur and Manila, which had been strained after months of failure by Philippine negotiators to secure the hostages' freedom. *AP*

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DOH chief hits drug companies

By N. Bordadora

HEALTH Secretary Alberto Romualdez yesterday accused multinational drug companies in the country of derailing the government's efforts to bring down the prices of medicine and make them accessible to more Filipinos.

Romualdez lashed out at the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines for engaging in "double talk" when it claimed that its concern for the health and welfare of the public was the main reason it opposed the importation of cheap drugs by the Department of Health.

"(They) claim that they are concerned with the health of the people, yet they exhaust all means to stop the government from bringing in products that may compete in price with their own costly brands," Romualdez said in a statement.

He added: "These companies can opt to sell larger volumes of their products at lower prices to more Filipinos in need of medicine rather than sell small volumes at high prices to the few who can afford them.

"We're not asking them to make less money. We're just asking them to redesign their business practices to consider the needs of the Filipino people."

Romualdez vouched for the quality of the imported medicines that the DOH is selling at seven government hospitals nationwide.

Pharmaceutical firms have repeatedly aired apprehension over the possible entry of fake and substandard medicines through the parallel importation.

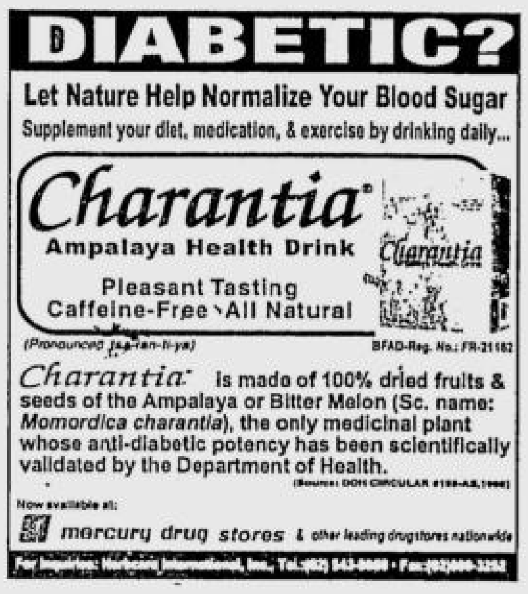
"No other agency or company has been authorized to import these medicines, nor is any pharmacy authorized to sell them," Romualdez said.

He said the importation was subjected to the requirements set by the Bureau of Food and Drugs.

The medicines are imported from India by the Philippine International Trading Corp.

They are available at the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center in Manila, East Avenue Medical Center and Philippine Children's Medical Center, both in Quezon City; Rizal Medical Center in Pasig; Western Visayas Medical Center in Iloilo City; Davao Regional Hospital in Tagum City; and Davao Medical Center in Davao City.

Romualdez said the parallel importation was not meant to put pharmaceutical firms out of business. He said the entire inventory was valued at only P1.5 million.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CONSUMER & OIL PRICE WATCH

-Private Sector-

SO THE PUBLIC MAY KNOW

OIL PRICE OUTLOOK - GOOD IN 2001

Definitely, we can expect stability in the prices of locally refined and imported petroleum products in 2001. In the last 18 months, we have had many increases, effectively doubling the price of petroleum products as crude oil went up from $15.00 to $31.00.

This year, we see Dubai crude prices ranging from a low of $22 and a high of $26 per barrel. At the same time, the peso may hover between P49 and P57 per dollar, depending on the outcome of the impeachment trial.

JANUARY PRICE DECREASE

Oil Prices should decrease by P2.60 per liter before deducting the "other recoveries" claimed by the oil companies. This reduction is due to the following factors:

1. The $8.67 per barrel drop of Dubai crude in December to $21.65 per barrel from $30.32 in November and the slight one centavo peso depreciation.
2. The suspension of the 3% tariff on all imported oil products in December which translates into 29 centavos per liter.
3. The deduction of the 65-centavo per liter crude cost under recovery being claimed by the oil companies for October and November, which we have accepted in lieu of our own estimate of 32 centavos, just so we can start with a clean slate and an all-even situation in Year 2001.

OTHER COST RECOVERIES

In our meeting with the oil companies, we stated that their claim for "other cost recoveries" should be taken up directly with the Secretary of Energy, since these other cost factors are policy issues.

We, however, responded to their various claims as follows:

1. Interest Charges to finance the higher cost of crude which has more than doubled.

   Our Response: We should have been informed from the very start that the consumers would be made to pay for their increased interest charges.

2. Foreign Exchange Loss from the peso depreciation.

   Our Response: Consumers should not be made to pay for forex losses resulting from a business decision the oil firms made when they opted to borrow on a 90 to 150- day dollar denominated suppliers' credit to offset the higher interest cost of a peso loan.

3. Increased cost due to the lowering of sulfur content on diesel from 0.5% to 0.2% starting January 2001.

   Our Response: We have no objection to the higher cost in implementing the Clean Air Act provided the consumers are informed of the breakdown of the cost and how it is distributed on a per liter basis to each product.

4. Recovery of P4 billion losses claimed by the oil companies in Year 2000.

   Our Response: The manner of computing the oil firms' gross profit on a per liter basis for the Year 2001 must be made known. Using this formula, we may allow partial recovery of their losses but NOT retroactive to January 2000.

DEREGULATED TO A FULLY DEREGULATED OIL INDUSTRY

Like rice, the price of oil is a "politically sensitive commodity". It affects the general public. To make FULL Deregulation work, the oil industry and the Department of Energy (DOE) must operate with total transparency and with full disclosure of any movement in prices, with their cost breakdown in a simplified user-friendly method of reporting.

The oil companies and the DOE must **gain the confidence of the public. When this confidence is attained**, we can, then, move to Dubai MOPS Price Monitoring, which is the daily average spot price transacted in Singapore of imported finished petroleum products.

By using the MOPS as reference, we can establish how competitive locally refined and imported petroleum products are on a daily or weekly basis in the Asian Region.

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OPINION

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Vol. 16 No. 27
ISSN 0116-2642

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The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at Chino Roces Avenue (formerly Pasong Tamo) corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati • P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office, 1263 Makati City, Philippines • Our new telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments; Editorial Fax 897-4793, 897-4794; Advertising 897-4807; Circulation 527-33-42, 527-33-46, 528-01-83, 528-01-86 and 528-02-13, Fax: 528-02-34.

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Profile of a cover-up

EDITORIAL

THE TESTIMONY of Clarissa Ocampo, senior vice president of Equitable PCI Bank, at the impeachment trial on Tuesday had as much damaging impact on President Estrada as her testimony on Dec. 22, before the trial was suspended for the Christmas holidays.

In her testimony on Dec. 22, Ocampo said she saw the President sign on Feb. 4, 2000, the false name "Jose Velarde" on a management trust agreement transferring P500 million to a company owned by a presidential crony, William Gatchalian. In her testimony on Jan. 2, 2001, Ocampo described an attempt to cover up the transaction through the preparation of documents transferring the P500-million trust account to a close friend of the President, businessman Jaime Dichaves.

The new set of documents tried to show that the account in the name of Jose Velarde was Dichaves', not the President's. Dichaves signed the documents on Dec. 13, five days before he wrote to the Senate claiming ownership of the "Jose Velarde" account. The new agreement was not implemented, according to Ocampo, because the President, as Jose Velarde, did not write an authorization letter, designating Dichaves as his assignee in the trust agreement. If the agreement had been implemented, the altered document would have reinforced Dichaves' claim that he owned the "Jose Velarde" account.

The testimony of Dec. 22 sought to establish that the President falsified his signature but that of Jan. 2, drew a profile of cover-up. What made the apparent attempt of cover-up more damning to the President and his defense lawyers was that, in the course of questioning by senator-judges, Ocampo testified that the new agreement was signed in the office of the President's lawyer, Estelito Mendoza. This circumstance cast a cloud of irregularity in the preparation of the documents, putting Mendoza on the defensive. The revelation prompted Mendoza to make a manifestation emphatically denying knowledge that Dichaves had signed documents in Mendoza's office. When Ocampo linked Mendoza's office to the preparation of the documents, Mendoza appeared stunned on TV.

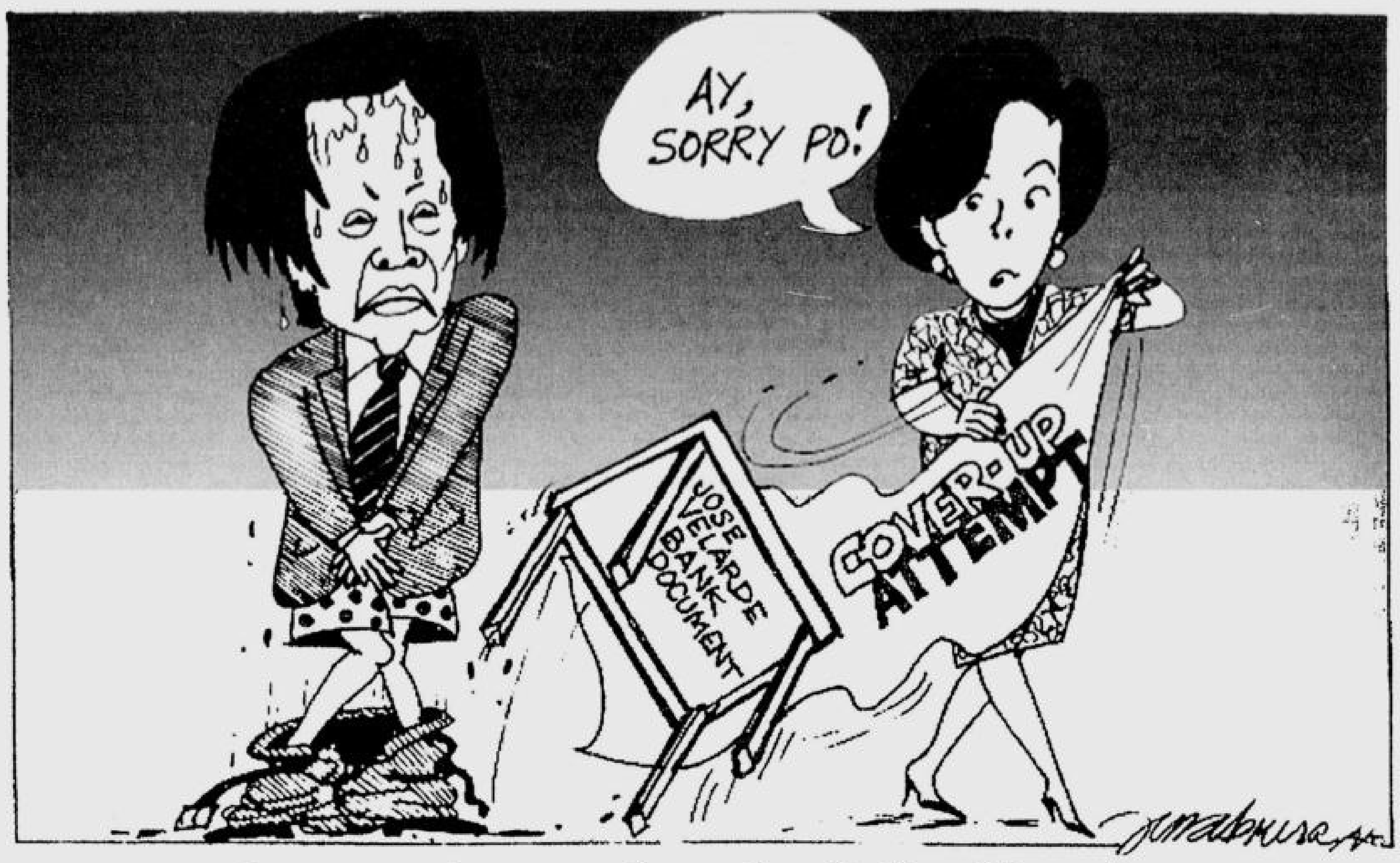
While the prosecution, which had hinted before Ocampo testified on Dec. 22 that she had talked with Mendoza, is not disposed to make a case of alleged irregularity against Mendoza, some senator-judges are raising questions about Mendoza's role in the preparation of the new documents. For example, Sen. Franklin Drilon has said Mendoza has a lot to explain and Mendoza's manifestation has raised more questions about his role in the attempted cover-up.

Some lawyers have said that Dichaves, in the light of Ocampo's testimony, could be liable for perjury or obstruction of justice. Her testimony of Jan. 2 has given the trial an unexpected twist. The spotlight has shifted to Mendoza. Already in the hearings at the Senate blue ribbon committee over the allegations of *jueteng* payoffs to the President made by Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, and in the trial itself, the testimony of the President's alleged auditor, Yolanda Ricaforte, had drawn the contour of cover-up in the transfer of millions of pesos in bank accounts entrusted to her. The Ocampo testimony has put in sharp relief the cover-up attempts, intended to draw away the paper trail from the direction of the President.

One indication that the Ocampo testimony was wounding the President is that the defense has resolutely tried to block her from testifying and to bar the admission of her testimony as evidence on grounds of technicality, questioning its relevance and materiality to Article 2 of the impeachment complaint. The blocking effort has failed. At some point, the meeting at Mendoza's office on Dec. 13, in which the new trust management agreement was signed, could no longer be stopped from surfacing in the trial.

In its third week, the direction of the trial has become unpredictable and has been full of surprises. The prosecution has sprung "surprise witnesses" whose credibility has been hard to destroy. The unexpected "bombshells" delivered by witnesses who come from establishments considered friendly to the President are wreaking havoc on the defense.

At the rate the testimony is exploding in his face, the senator-judges friendly to the President may have to look for extraordinary reasons to justify a verdict of not guilty.



Ocampo's new bombs full of ironies

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

BOMBS are still exploding in Metro Manila. And the bomber has been identified. She is a pretty bank official, and her name is Clarissa Ocampo.

Ocampo exploded more bombs last Tuesday at the Senate impeachment trial of President Estrada. The bombs were so powerful they could blast Erap right out of Malacañang; they already sent Erap's lead lawyer, Estelito Mendoza, running for cover. Shrapnel hit presidential crony Jaime Dichaves, the President's lawyer Fernando Chua and former Equitable PCI Bank chair and the President's friend George L. Go.

The first bomb blasted the claim of Dichaves that the "Jose Velarde" account belonged to him. On the contrary, it showed that Dichaves, Chua and Go tried to cover up for the President by making a second set of documents pertaining to the P500-million loan to Wellex Corp. to make it appear that the "Jose Velarde" account belonged to Dichaves.

The second bomb revealed that the signing of the documents was made in the office of presidential counsel Estelito Mendoza. The lawyer denied knowing of and being present during the signing. But why was the signing made in his office in the first place?

The third bomb revealed that Chua went to Ocampo's office after the "Jose Velarde" account surfaced and asked her what the bank was doing with the documents of the investment management agreement (IMA) on which the President signed not his name but the name Jose Velarde. She replied that management was reviewing them. Chua then told her to "protect the President."

The fourth bomb revealed that the P1.2-billion "Jose Velarde" account was already in existence in 1999 when Erap filed his statement of assets and liabilities wherein he declared under oath that his total assets amounted to only P35 million.

All these show that Erap committed an illegal act by using an alias for his bank account, that his lawyers and friends tried to hide this fact by having a new set of bank documents made in which Dichaves was the owner of the account (this opens Dichaves and the lawyers to charges of obstruction of justice and tampering with evidence) and that Erap lied under oath in his statement of assets and liabilities.

It may be relevant to note that US President Richard Nixon was impeached and forced to resign on charges of obstruction of justice. He was not charged with ordering the Watergate break-in but in trying to cover it up. In Erap's case, it is his friends and lawyers who tried to cover up his illegal acts.

* * *

Ocampo's latest bombshell is full of ironies. One is that it was Erap's defenders in the Senate, notably Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, who paved the way for the new exposé, and that it was a non-lawyer, Sen. Loren Legarda, who lighted the fuse of the bombs. Another irony is that the defense refrained from cross-examining Ocampo, prompting the senator-judges to question her, and this led to the new revelations. A third irony is that Erap's allies in the Senate were trying to help him by trying to impugn the credibility of the witness and the admissibility of her documents. Instead they led him to disaster.

When Ocampo finished her direct testimony, the defense panel waived cross-examination based on its continuing objection to her testimony allegedly because it is irrelevant and immaterial to the Articles of Impeachment. Another reason is that they knew she was telling the truth and cross-examining her could only strengthen her testimony as it did the testimony of Emma Lim. And knowing what Mendoza knows about her knowledge of what went on in his office, it was extremely hazardous to question her further. It was best to let her go quickly.

But Enrile wanted to help Erap by destroying Ocampo's credibility and asked that he be allowed to question her. In a caucus, the senators agreed to extend to five minutes the period of questioning the witness. And the defense's worst fears were fulfilled.

All the hostile questions of Enrile and the other Erap allies (John Osmeña, Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Tessie Aquino-Oreta) did not faze Ocampo.

There are many lawyers in the Senate who think they are smart, but it was a non-lawyer, Senator Legarda, who asked the question that opened the Pandora's box and exposed the attempted cover-up.

Legarda asked Ocampo what prompted her to voluntarily come out and testify. Ocampo said when she saw in the newspapers the Jose Velarde signature on the P142-million check used to pay for the Boracay mansion, she knew she had to come out because she could identify the owner.

She also feared for her safety and that of her family, knowing that he was a witness to Erap's signing of his alias Jose Velarde on the bank documents.

"I was concerned (because) Attorney Chua saw me sometime (in the) first week of December asking me about the documents and what we were doing about it," she said. "So...they remembered that I was there. I witnessed. And apparently, after reviewing all transactions in the bank (they saw) probably (there were) just two of us who actually saw the President sign as Jose Velarde...This is the government, this is Malacañang."

Besides she said she was concerned about the orders from her superior, Go, to prepare a new set of documents, and the fact that the signing was done in the office of Mendoza. And all hell broke loose.

Note that the right question was not asked by any of the lawyers in the room. Not by the prosecution, not one of the senator-lawyers. It was asked by a non-lawyer, Senator Legarda, a sensible layman. Thank heavens, for non-lawyers.

* * *

TODAY"S Erap joke:

Erap apologized to Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago for not giving her the same P1-million *balato* given to Senators Tessie Aquino-Oreta and John Osmeña. "But if you can answer this question I will double your *balato*," he said.

Miriam: "Shoot."

Erap: "What is the future tense form of impeach?"

Miriam: "Acquit!"

Slaughter of the Innocents

WINDMILLS

Jerry Barican

THREE days after the 2,000th anniversary of the slaughter of innocents for purely political reasons, the devil was at it again. Whoever blew up infants, women, everyday commuters and police officers doing their duty was not doing it for passion, or money, or even in a fit of madness. It was done coldly, not in heat. For the sake of power, and nothing else.

This is the type of case that puts to the test my personal opposition to the death penalty. In my own—as in many others'—imagination, I have wished upon the perpetrators of this abomination the worst punishment possible on earth and in hell. A quick death seems almost merciful to anyone who could premeditatedly decapitate children. But let us first catch and try them.

During the first few hours following the bombing, people rushed their favorite theory to judgment. With neither facts nor evidence as yet in hand, many politicians, broadcasters and columnists played the Queen of Hearts in "Alice in Wonderland": "Sentence first, trial later." Even "third-hand hearsay"—polite language for gossip—has been bandied about as fact deserving of news stories, even headlines.

What we can use as a starting point is the obvious: only a member of the military, or retired military, or at least someone with access to military-style training could have masterminded and carried out these bombings. By the time this sees print, the authorities may have publicly revealed their findings about this case. Others also have had things to say, somewhat less authoritatively.

If the persons involved turn out to be identified with this administration, as some in the opposition have proclaimed in the past, the effect would be devastating for it. It is equally axiomatic, however, that if they turn out to be identified with the previous administration or the opposition, and the evidence is credible, even compelling, there will also be hell to pay.

The opposition, or elements of it, must now probably deeply regret making those vague threats about a year-end deadline for the President to resign "or else," and must hope that many of us have also forgotten it. Those threats were unwise at best, and gave mischievous and deadly elements of our society an opportunity to act under cover.

Administration sources have hinted in the newspapers that two individuals, variously characterized as either witnesses or accomplices, have named the person who handed them one of the bombs which later exploded, killing and maiming brave police officers who were attempting to defuse it. Where this chain of responsibility will lead has not yet been revealed. But wherever these reports turn out to lead, they will have the most profound political consequences.

It is therefore important that the evidence be convincing and that the physical and other evidence be preserved. Whatever our political biases might be, we must insist on capturing and convicting the true terrorists whoever they might be and not just the "usual suspects."

Until now, the list of suspects has remained as long as it is either credible or incredible, depending on your political proclivities. What theory did you prefer? Muslim terrorists with foreign connections and training, funded with ransom money and motivated by hatred from the military response in Mindanao? There was even the evidentiary touch of the Cruseh bombings in Indonesia to tie up the theory with international Afghan-trained terrorists.

Similar complex theories described in turn how the communists, or the administration, or the opposition, were behind the bombings. What was lacking were the facts. Thanks to the cooperation of the two witnesses at the bombing site, these facts are now emerging. Whether they will become convincing proof depends upon how they are handled and presented by the authorities.

The danger of these investigations is that we will choose to believe or not believe any evidence based largely upon our political prejudices. Those who are culprits to some will be fall guys to others. Indeed, large numbers of people believe, to this day, that Ferdinand Marcos was responsible for the bombing at Plaza Miranda in 1971, despite credible and repeated testimony by witnesses that rogue elements of the communist underground actually carried it out. Like the Vietnam War's My Lai, such crimes are never interpreted with political neutrality.

Consequently, the evidence needs to be airtight, or as airtight as is humanly possible. Even then, do not expect an absence of controversy. In the current political mood, each side has so demonized the other that truth has often been the first victim.

One clear way of avoiding this pitfall is to include a respected, professional and independent third party in the investigation. There is no place either for bias or for do-gooding amateurs. Besides, where can you find true "independents" in today's political mood? Nothing would achieve this as much as accepting the offer of the American investigative agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to assist in solving the crime.

Whoever are guilty of these crimes are world-class terrorists who deserve all that is coming to them. They should not be permitted to hide behind propaganda or political posturing. And involving the FBI will help convince the public that the accused are truly guilty and not mere fall guys. Sometimes even nationalism must take a back seat to the overriding national interest.

Meantime, the trial will go on. It will not be unaffected by these events. If any of Joseph Estrada's political opponents in the trial are found to have participated in this crime, the political outrage will dwarf the controversy over the President's alleged sins. A reverse situation will swamp the President's political boat. This tale of the innocents has every opportunity to wag the dog.

Shining courage

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

CLARISSA Ocampo, in her explosive testimony before the Senate impeachment tribunal, asserted that President Estrada signed the savings/checking account at Equitable PCI Bank as "Jose Velarde" and that Jaime Dichaves was made the fall guy in claiming ownership of that account in order to save him. The bank's chief legal counsel, Manuel Curato, corroborated Ocampo's testimony.

After those testimony, the prosecution has won the battle and President Estrada has no other recourse except to resign. His closest advisers, Ernesto Maceda, Eduardo Cojuangco and Edgardo Angara, as well as his lawyers ought to tell him it's time to go, as he faces certain conviction. Why prolong the agony and make the people suffer further by sending the economy into a continued tailspin? It is time also for decent elements in the Cabinet and the bureaucracy to withdraw support from Estrada.

* * *

There is a scenario being pushed by some people that both Estrada and Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ought to resign to pave the way for a snap election to be held under the auspices of a civil-military junta. This is a silly scenario and I'm glad that analyst Alex Magno shot it down in a recent Standard column. Macapagal is the constitutional successor to Estrada and she has every right to succeed a resigned or convicted Estrada. To tinker with the constitutional succession at this time is to invite bigger trouble from adventurers who are waiting in the wings like hungry wolves. The nation, like a building, can only take so many seismic shocks, as the alternative would be collapse.

What every right-thinking citizen ought to do in the event of an Estrada resignation is to rally around the Vice President, and help strengthen and consolidate the nation and revitalize the economy. If in the next three years we don't like the way she is performing her job, we can always elect another president. But in the meantime, let's hold the nation together.

* * *

Nothing can be stronger and more compelling than the force of truth. The verity of that biblical saying that "The truth shall make you free" was demonstrated yesterday with dignity and poise by Ocampo. She wove a simple but obviously truthful story about Jose Velarde and Dichaves and no amount of legal harassment from the senators perceived to be friendly to the President could shake her. In my opinion, Ocampo, the epitome of truthfulness, courage and dignity under fire, qualifies eminently for the "Filipino of the Year" award.

* * *

Against her shining truthfulness, lawyer Estelito Mendoza's yarn about not knowing what was going on in his law office last Dec. 13 looked quite pathetic. Mendoza said that contrary to Ocampo's allegation that the signing of the second investment-management agreement (IMA) being faked in the name of Dichaves took place in his office, he did not know anything about it, and that bank chair George Go, Dichaves and Ocampo met in his office by chance. This is inconceivable, since Mendoza was already the star defense lawyer at that point. Moreover, that second IMA was obviously an instrument to cover up the real identity of Jose Velarde.

Note that two days earlier, routine bank records such as the specimen signature card were signed by Dichaves in the bank's offices, but the IMA, the most important document, had to be signed at the lawyer's office two days later. The President's lawyer naturally had to look at it. Mendoza's claim that he did not know anything about it was an insult to the intelligence. *Masyado naman niyang ginagago ang taong-bayan.* I wish he hadn't even tried to defend himself.

* * *

Ocampo said in her testimony that the Dichaves cover-up for the President/Jose Velarde in the P500 million transaction didn't materialize because there was no letter of authorization from the latter allowing the fund transfer to the Dichaves account. Why? One theory is that Estrada was afraid of losing the P500 million for good. *Baka ma*-Marcos *siya*. Recall that after the dictator died, Imelda Marcos claimed many funds, stocks and other assets, which some cronies never returned.

* * *

The defense lawyers chose not to cross-examine Ocampo for two reasons. Firstly, they knew she was telling the truth and that the public believed her. Lawyers attest that it is difficult to cross-examine someone like that. Furthermore, they wanted to stick to their position that her testimony was not material and relevant to the case. Hence it fell on the senators perceived to be friendly to Mr. Estrada to cross-examine her. Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile could be seen coaching Sen. Nikki Coseteng. Sen. Tessie Oreta, in the midst of her questioning of Ocampo was handed a message by a page. These were obviously pointers. As for Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, she was trying to make *pa*-cute with her queries, but the gallery didn't have a taste for it.

* * *

Unfortunately for Estrada, other senators joined in and two non-lawyer senators, Loren Legarda and Rodolfo Biazon, and lawyer Rene Cayetano, were able to ferret out the "personal" details from Ocampo that the prosecution failed to do because of the defense's constant objections. These led to Tuesday's startling disclosures. And even though Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. ruled that objections may be directed by the prosecution toward the senator-judges, it was obvious that this was easier said than done. In fact, Davide didn't entertain a single objection to the judges from the prosecutors.

Under questioning from Legarda, Ocampo disclosed the motives that made her come out as a witness. On the other hand, Biazon extracted from her the story of how she met with Dichaves and Go at Mendoza's office, with instructions to cover up the Velarde account. Cayetano got her to speak about her fears for her life and those of her family, especially in the wake of the bombings in Metro Manila.

* * *

If Mario Bautista, the private lawyer hired by Equitable PCI Bank to handle Ocampo's direct testimony, survived defense lawyer Jose Flaminiano's determination to stop her testimony, 24 hours of going without sleep and Davide's controversial "burden of proof" ruling, the talk is that this may be because Bautista had all the "supernatural" help. UP-educated Ayo Bautista comes from a family of priests, nuns and lawyers. One of 12 children of the late lawyer Jose Bautista Jr. and grandson of Judge Jose Bautista Sr., Ayo has two brothers who are Jesuit priests, Fathers Ramon and Norberto, and a Jesuit uncle, Fr. Tony Bautista. One sister is a numerary of the Opus Dei, while another is a nun with the contemplative Pink Sisters in Tagaytay. An aunt, Mother Deolindis, founded a religious order, Workers of Christ The Worker, in Pangasinan.

Questions

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IT was a touching performance by defense lawyer Estelito Mendoza Tuesday afternoon, speaking "on my own behalf" as he attempted to defuse the bombshell dropped by prosecution witness Clarissa Ocampo. Ocampo testified that she was with Equitable PCI Bank chair George Go and businessman Jaime Dichaves in Mendoza's office when Dichaves signed antedated bank documents in an attempt to show that Dichaves was the real owner of the "Jose Velarde" account. Ocampo had earlier testified that the real "Jose Velarde" is President Estrada.

In his explanation, Mendoza said that Go showed up at his office unannounced, without an appointment, and was later joined by Dichaves. But he had no part in their meeting and thus no knowledge of the signing of any documents, washing his hands of any impression that he might have been involved in an attempt to mislead the impeachment court.

Still, so many questions beg to be asked.

For one thing, why did Go have to meet with Dichaves in Mendoza's office when the trial was already underway? Go was chair of a bank whose headquarters boast of an impressive theater and doubtless an equally impressive board room and sizeable office suite, especially for the chair. They could also very well have hired a function room in any hotel or even met in either of their homes.

As Sen. Nene Pimentel asked so simply: What were Go and Dichaves doing in Mendoza's office? Mendoza was neither man's lawyer, and given that he was a defense counsel of the President, shouldn't he have been more prudent about entertaining in his workplace the head of a bank already implicated in alleged money laundering, and a friend prominently mentioned among the President's cronies?

* * *

OTHER questions came up during the detailed questioning by the senator-judges of Ocampo after the defense refused to cross-examine her.

In an apparent attempt to explain the source of the President's alleged money in the Jose Velarde account, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago brought up the possibility that Erap received an influx of contributions soon after it became apparent that he had won the 1998 elections and proclaimed himself President.

"If my memory serves me right," writes a friend, "Miriam was leading the first three or four days (in 1992), and she did proclaim herself the winner. Question: Is it far-fetched to imagine that she did receive contributions from businessmen and executives during the first three days when she was leading? Did she report this in her income tax return in 1993?"

And even if the estimated P1.2 billion in the Jose Velarde account, by the prosecution's calculation, was indeed a post-election windfall for President-elect Estrada, why didn't he report this in his statement of income and liabilities? Did he or his party pay taxes on this money?

Besides, is it proper or even legal for a candidate to treat campaign contributions as his or her own personal funds, to invest in friends' companies or to build and buy mansions? I wonder what Comelec Chair Harriet Demetriou would have to say about such a "common" practice, as Santiago claimed.

* * *

AS a depositor at Equitable PCI Bank, though the money I have with it is of minor importance to the bank's cash flow, I view with concern all the scuttlebutt and text *chismis* about alleged massive withdrawals from this bank.

The way I understand it, people are citing two reasons for taking their money out of the bank. First is umbrage at the role it played in allegedly assisting in the laundering of *jueteng* payoffs and other illegal money in Erap's name. Second is concern about the bank's continued ability to honor the confidentiality of accounts since bank officials are now testifying about the ownership of once-secret and confidential accounts.

Senators questioning Ocampo attempted to place her, and the bank, between a rock and a hard place. One wanted to know why, despite a Central Bank directive prohibiting the opening of accounts under aliases or false names, the bank processed the "Jose Velarde" account. Another wanted to know how the bank could reveal the details of the same account when it had neither a court order (the documents presented were not subpoenaed) nor the depositor's permission.

* * *

I WOULDN'T blame Equitable PCI Bank officials if they feel trapped in a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation.

I must admit that even as early as the sale of PCIBank to Equitable, with the help of substantial investments from the GSIS and SSS, I was tempted to sever my ties with the bank. I suspected (rightly, it turns out) that it had now somehow become a crony institution. But, I had also developed good relations with the staff and officers of the PCIBank Greenhills branch, who have been most accommodating, so I stayed with them.

Now, friends and relatives say even my measly account is in peril. But to close my account now would be tantamount to punishing the bank for finally doing the right thing. It has broken no laws, since the bank secrecy law does not apply in impeachment proceedings. And if it had allowed itself to be used by the President in the past, it has at least made amends. Go, the former chair and Erap friend, has paid a price by stepping down, though he remains part of the board.

And what was that cheap shot made by Sen. Tito Sotto about the new bank chair, lawyer Roberto Romulo? So what if Romulo is president of the Makati Business Club and his law firm is assisting the prosecution? The way I see it, it is Equitable PCI Bank that is borrowing Romulo's reputation. The identity of the new chair has no bearing on the truth or falsity of the testimony of the witnesses from the bank and the accuracy of the documents presented.

Senator Sotto, it's time to recognize the truth now that it's staring you in the face.

Blood and epiphanies

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

THERE must be more to all this upheaval, otherwise we would be swallowed up in despair. So hold on just a little longer to the afterglow of the Christmas season, savor just a little longer the bitter-sweetness that settled in your soul. We need all the peace inside us to see and be convinced that there is something we can hope for. Now we brace ourselves for what is to come.

Those of us who have emerged from the holidays unscathed and whole cannot say we are really happy and at peace. How could we when for so many, blood was the color of the last days of the century and of the millennium? (I go with those who set the start of the new one on Jan. 1, 2001 and not on Jan. 1, 2000.)

We've been literally bled out. And I do not know what to say to the victimizers who mercilessly blasted into small pieces the scores of innocents on Dec. 30. The politically incorrect Manila Mayor Lito Atienza called them animals. Again, here is someone who insults God's innocent creatures by using their name to describe the evil that humans do. But that is another topic of discussion.

The dead are now beyond pain but for those who are left behind and grieving, pain and anger will define their lives for a long time. The word forgiveness is not easy on the tongue.

On Dec. 28, Feast of the Holy Innocents, Fr. Benjamin Inocencio of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) was gunned down in front of the Jolo Cathedral, the same place where his fellow Oblate, Bishop Benjamin de Jesus was shot dead three years ago. Father Benjie was killed the day after the end of Ramadan and on the feast of the Hariraya. It was a glorious day to go. But it takes great faith to be able to believe that.

I have gathered some facts about this second slain Benjamin for a feature story and I was told he spent seven years in a "hardship" post among Muslims on an island in the middle of the Sulu Sea. After that he was transferred to Jolo, considered a hot spot, ironically to have an easier time. Jolo was supposed to be a welcome change for a man long marooned on an island named Mapun, which takes anywhere from 24 to 48 hours to reach (no stopovers) from Zamboanga by *lantsa*. But as his bishop told me, Father Benjie was not one to consider life on a remote island a punishing one. He was always giving, giving, giving.

Father Benjie was in Jolo for only six months. Then someone put a bullet in his head.

Two days later, on Dec. 30, was the slaughter of the innocents. Five bombs exploded, killing more than a dozen and maiming scores of people who were simply on their way to somewhere. Where is the sense in that?

So on New Year's Eve, the INQUIRER served a banner photo of a *barangay tanod* carrying a little girl who looked like a limp rag doll covered with spaghetti tomato sauce. (Sorry, I have to describe it that way.) It was a shocker of a photo by Erik Arazas. The INQUIRER does not always banner that kind of thing, but how else to portray the brutality, the cruelty, the evil? The editors were deliberate about putting that on people's breakfast table on the last day of the year.

Channel 7's Alex Tinsay pursued the INQUIRER lead and tracked down the little girl. He found out who the girl was. He found her in a coffin surrounded by a devastated family. He also found her badly wounded brother.

* * *

Signs of life. But there were, are signs of life. During this week of the Epiphany, the Filipinos' extension of the Christmas season, one can't miss those signs that already started to force themselves through the impeachment trial of the President and the din and darkness that hovered over us before Christmas Day. There were manifestations of light. Epiphanies, if I may call them that.

I would like to share the reflections (excerpts from the Christmas homily) of Jesuit theologian Carlos Abesamis on the amazing lights that he saw: "When Clarissa Ocampo testified last Dec. 22, I was in tears. Here was a woman who made a decision to risk her life and that of her family. Here was a woman who made a decision to step forward and speak the truth...

"A few days earlier, television showed how Emma Lim and her truth were like a gentle mountain brook. It flowed, nature-fresh and pure, into one's heart. *Parang dalisay na batis na dumadaloy sa puso ng nanonood.* Because her truth was water, it could not mix with oil. Her testimony was living water, the cross examination was oil...

"Even Chavit Singson's testimony came across to me as a steady flow of personal truth. He too was like a river...When he was done, I was knee-deep in a murky flood. That flood, recreated by Chavit's testimony, was a partial representation of the underworld. It was the sleazy world of corruption, gambling, cronyism...ugly, terrifying.

"As I watched all this, I was all the while meditating. Or better, I was being made to meditate. Or better, something was coming across to me from the TV screen. And it was Something Spiritual. Have you ever seen a lighted *nipa* hut glowing in a dark forest? Light filters through the *sawali* slits. Recall Emma Lim's face. Was hers not a face that gleamed with the Spirit glowing from the inner spaces of her being?

"And Clarissa's face and eyes? Were they not localities in this universe where the Spirit of God appeared to be at home, confident and at ease? Even Chavit, during the moments that he sat on the witness stand, looked like a *tambayan* where the Spirit would not mind hanging out. *Parang nakatambay din ang Espiritu doon.*

"Emma, Clarissa and Chavit have a message for me, and that is that the Spirit is POLITICAL! Life in the Spirit cannot simply be an affair that happens in a cathedral or in my prayer room. The urgings of the Spirit in our hearts impel us towards political action. This is the call of Emma, Clarissa and Chavit to us. *Makilahok sa usapin ng sambayanan. Itaya ang sarili.* Say 'never again' to an Erap-type of leadership and follow through with consistent action. *Manumpa na hindi na mauulit.*"

More epiphanies ahead of us!

Alpha males, Erap hairdo and then some (dimsum)

YOUNGBLOOD

Ryan Asis Maniago

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

"DIMSUM," I remembered my Chinese boss say, "means 'point to your heart's desire'." The thought entered my mind as the Filipino waiter in Chinese garb wheeled a dimsum cart past my table. I called him and pointed to my heart's desire: fresh shrimp dumplings, *taosi* spare ribs and taro puffs.

I was alone that night, in an obscure Chinese restaurant for a quick bite after a fruitless hunt in Manila's many nightspots. The place was abloom with women. (Here's a tip: hole-in-the-wall Chinese restaurants, those that open till the wee hours to accommodate post-party revelers, are prime pick-up places. It's a habit unbecoming of a good hunter, but even lions are known to scavenge if they fail to snag a prey.)

Fresh steam greeted my face when I uncovered one of the round woven containers in which the dumplings were cooked and served. Seated at another table across me was a middle-aged couple—a husband and wife, I assumed—whose attention was aroused by my choice of dimsum. They were signaling the waiter to get the same dish I was having. I wanted to have the same dish the husband was having: his wife.

The wife was stunningly beautiful and well-kept despite her age. The husband, in contrast, was a weathered, pot-bellied, baggy-eyed fellow who resembled Erap with his grotesque hairdo and patent moustache. He looked rich, too. I had seen this same man before in another restaurant with another woman, a much younger one. I thought to myself, is it the moustache or the mansions that lure mistresses to a man?

I do not have both. All I have is my youth and vigor, which I hoped the wife appreciated when she caught me craning my sturdy neck to have a better look at her. She smiled. For the next half-hour we were stealing glances at each other, but that was all we could do. That was all I could do under the circumstances. I am not a pro. Neither do I have many mansions.

But when the husband snuggled close to her, pecked her cheek and threw me dagger looks, I realized that was the obligatory chest-thumping and territorial pissing all male primates are known for. Now I had to swing my eyes between the husband's ire and the wife's fire. To soften the colliding glances, I took deep drags at my cigarette and blew mouthfuls into the air. The smoke screen proved futile, though, as the husband's glances morphed into a hard, angry stare. I looked away.

The old man was out of shape and I knew I could beat him to a pulp if provoked, but that kind of machismo isn't my thing. As Michael Jackson would say, "I'm a lover, not a fighter."

What is it with aging men that make them hang on to their egos like fools to gold? Men spend an entire lifetime building walls around their fragile egos only to find out in mid-life that the walls will come tumbling down to crush the very temple of worship they seek to protect. Panic is inevitable.

To help answer my question, I nursed this pet theory I call the "alpha male syndrome." In chimp society, the "alpha male" is the strongest, most virile male in the group, called "party-gangs" by anthropologists. Chimpanzees, our closest cousins, are known to engage in intense dominance games to determine who the alpha male is. These include raucous displays such as shouting, posturing, hurling and dragging objects. Building mansions is a recent innovation.

Aside from his male allies, the dominant chimp relies on female chimpanzees to affirm his alpha status and determine the length of his tenure which, like all tenures on power, is bound to end. While he has it, though, he enjoys first choice in food, females and other resources.

What he doesn't realize is that at its peak, power can breed complacency. While the alpha male is busy roughing it up with the boys, female chimpanzees are known to sneak out of the harem to sleep with rival males. I glanced at the couple again and caught the wife smiling at me in come-hither fashion.

The husband was busy wolfing a jumbo *siopao,* which he held with thick, knobby fingers, before washing it down with a mouthful of San Miguel beer. He chewed his food religiously and with relish, like a lion.

Then his chewing stopped. I realized he had caught me looking, and I had no choice but to bow my head in humility. I remembered that subordinate male chimps are expected to pay homage to the alpha male by making subservient gestures, such as showing him one's "humbled" genitals. I didn't think that bowing my head gave him a view of my penis, but I did see something down there that was just as, well, "swell-headed."

Erap's face was splashed all over the front page of the newspaper that lay forgotten on my lap. It was yesterday's news, but I picked it up just the same to divert my attention and shield my face from the husband's piercing eyes. The effort wasn't good enough: I could still see the same moustache and hairdo, staring me in the face.

The headlines were nothing new: Erap, Erap, Erap and Erap. Erap fever is everywhere, I said to myself. We see him in the papers, on TV, in posters and stickers, even in Chinese restaurants—like the alpha male seated in front of me. I asked myself, could Erap possibly think he is the country's alpha male?

The indicators are there: the women, the macho posturing, the stubbornness to hold on to the highest position in the land. I can understand that. Men of his generation are typically pampered and spoiled with the privileges of patriarchy and the illusion of being on top. Their entire lifetime is an ego trip. Why relinquish the driver's seat if you're still enjoying the ride?

Because you're out of gas, grandpas. The "alpha male syndrome" has taken effect. Alpha males, despite the initial complacency, go through a great crisis once they start showing signs of decline. Testosterone levels wane, hairlines recede, virility goes down the hill. Some people call this phase "mid-life crisis" or "andropause," but the alpha male syndrome takes on a political and not just a physical dimension.

In alternating fits of denial and panic, the alpha male realizes that he has no choice but to amass great wealth in his pocket so that there remains at least one bulge in his pants with which to attract women. He amasses assets to make up for the diminishing physical resources.

What happens when a younger, stronger, more virile male enters the picture and threatens to oust him? The plot thickens (that's what Filipino sexual flicks are made of).

I am not trying to hold Erap up for ridicule. (I was a closet Erap fan, probably still am. In fact, I would have voted for him had I cared to vote in 1998 because of an intuitive sense of trust in his sincerity.) I do not mind his lavish lifestyle; I think altruism can coexist with hedonism. But I do mind the inefficiency, the arrogance, the unbending pride. Right now, amid the political mess, I can only give him the benefit of my apathy. I do not care anymore.

I can only wait for all those prehistoric geezers and aging baby boomers (Viagra candidates all) in government, the opposition and the media to die out so that a new generation of alpha males (and females) can start from scratch and spell out the country's future "alpha bets." If the pun doesn't cut it, then I'll cut my tirade short. Besides, it's hard to spin ageist rhetoric without revealing my own fears about aging—and the arrogance, the disillusionment, the jadedness that come with it.

"*Anti-Erap ka no*?" A tap on my shoulder snapped me out of my reverie. The husband, all smiles now, was walking past my table with his wife in tow. He was referring to the horns and other markings I had sketched on Erap's photos in the newspaper. I smiled back.

Beside me a group of blue-rinse matrons were giggling in their seats. One of them subtly pouted her lips to point an imaginary finger at me. Her two friends turned their heads and gave me a head-to-toe inspection, then asked for the waiter. Dimsum.

Ryan Asis Maniago, 25, came from the same school (and school of thought) as Erap.

Muslims again being used as scapegoats

LETTERS

WE, Metro Manila-based Muslim young professionals, regret that with the onslaught of destabilizing moves in the metropolis, the Muslims are again being tagged as suspects without any evidence. This is based on the irresponsible statements of some executive officials and security authorities blaming the recent bombings in Metro Manila on Moro rebels or certain terrorists.

In one instance at the SM Megamall, police authorities asked the owner of the package being inspected if he was Muslim. This reminded us of the illegal arrest of 26 Muslims in Maharlika Village, Taguig, for the Glorietta bombing. The suspects remain under arbitrary detention.

There seems to be a suspicious and consistent pattern of Muslims as the convenient scapegoats in any political crisis. For instance, President Estrada used the war in Mindanao to raise his approval ratings. He also used the Muslim youth in the dummy Erap Muslim Youth Foundation and blamed Moros for the bombings in malls.

In this regard, we also want to protest the announcement that the Muslim Youth and Student Alliance (Mysa) was supporting the administration-organized People's Movement Against Poverty, which issued a statement in December questioning Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's competence to lead the country. The Mysa is apolitical and has not officially released any statement regarding the political crisis.

Because of this government policy of using Muslims, we fear that Muslim communities will again be out under surveillance. We fear that any Muslim civilian or Muslim foreigner may be arbitrarily picked up for questioning. We fear that veiled Muslim women may be harassed in the guise of conducting inspections. This is discrimination based on religion.

We demand a stop to such indiscriminate acts of harassment because these constitute human rights violations. We appeal to government officials to stop using Muslims as scapegoats in case of terrorism.

Granting that some Moros may be responsible, authorities must only say so after they have gathered concrete evidence against them. Any irresponsible charge against Moros affects all the Muslims in this country because they belong to the minority.—**MAISARA DANDAMUN, convenor, Bangsamoro Young Professionals, Manila**

Restive retired generals are scary

I RETIRED from active service in 1998 and now I am operating three "multicabs" to support my family. I have cut my ties with the Army but have nonetheless remained true to the discipline I practiced while with the Armed Forces. That is why I was angry to hear that some retired generals are behind the scheme to use the Armed Forces to topple down the government.

What kind of retired generals do we have that at the first glimpse of power, they would jump at the chance of taking a ride? Former Defense Secretary Fortunato Abat has not only become a rambling *trapo* with his anti-Erap press releases but also an old and disgruntled general who wants to play the active man in uniform again. Where are the Philippine Military Academy values which he swore to keep and uphold? Or, were those simply textbook lessons for public consumption?

It looks like the members of the Association of Generals and Flag Officers are impatient and want more action where they can play lead commanders once again. This is a pathetic scene but also a scary one considering that they are on the loose and they are still arrogantly parading their stars while on the lookout for adventure. Playing golf is not enough to fire their sense of fun and they need a bigger playground to showcase their long muted talents.

If the news is to be believed at all, maybe it is time to defend ourselves from these senile generals.—**NAME WITHHELD ON REQUEST**

Aggression against the minority

WE are growing sick, tired and furious over the many pages of propaganda from "Kasambayan." We hope you are charging them enough so you can recover what you lost from last year's advertising boycott by the Estrada mafia. This repeated aggression against the so-called Makati minority or the church is divisive and obnoxious.

How much is being spent on this aggressive "agit-prop," to use the old Marxist label? How much did the grotesque and useless NBI enquiry on the dummy corporations holding the adulterous mansions cost? How much in public funds was spent on the El Shaddai gathering?

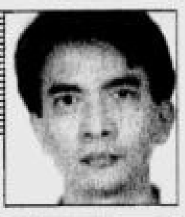
The distribution of pork barrel to buy off corrupt congressmen is treason at this time when the government is running a huge budgetary deficit, which will have to be financed by long-term bonds. Indeed the pork barrel is a fitting term for Malacañang.

The Philippines is being put to ridicule worldwide by the indecency of the President, in ways that are worse than the shoe collection of Imelda Marcos.

As long as the source of funds for the adulterous mansions has not been shown to be legal, normalcy will not return and Estrada deserves the lot of Bubby Dacer.—**W-A MIAILHE DE BURGH, 501 Burke Bldg. cor. Burke and Escolta, Manila 1006**

While we were sleeping

PINOY KASI



Michael L. Tan

I THOUGHT this should be a time as well to remind readers that there's more to life than the impeachment trial. While we were "sleeping," meaning while we were fixated over "Juetengate" and the trial, there have been other developments that didn't quite make it to the front pages or newscast headlines, yet, long after Erap is gone, we will probably still be grappling with the consequences of these developments.

First there was the fiasco of the Commission on Elections' registration of new voters, the deadline for which was last Dec. 27. There was a mad rush, especially in Metro Manila, with many people not being able to complete their requirements. The Comelec commissioners blamed the Filipino "*mañana* habit" for the last minute crunch but voters complained there was little information not just on the deadline but on the requirements for registration.

It's interesting that the problems were mainly in Metro Manila, showing how, in an urban area, the flow of government information faces more bottlenecks. In areas outside Manila, government information channels seem to operate more efficiently, helped along by the local grapevine. Metro Manila should be learning from other local government units.

Still on Comelec matters, it seems the plan to computerize the May polls has now been shelved. Again, we're told that it's too late to computerize. For a country that prides itself with having so many information technology professionals, we just can't seem to get our act together about using computers for something as vital as elections. Expect more fraud this May with flying voters and *dagdag-bawas* canvassing.

If our ballots run the danger of being trashed, we should be concerned too with the possibilities of another garbage crisis in Metro Manila. I don't mean the overstaying resident in Malacañang but trash trash. Now this looming crisis definitely involves the *mañana* habit. Despite several garbage crises in the past, we haven't come up with a sustainable waste-disposal strategy. San Mateo's residents, who have put up with Metro Manila's trash for years, graciously allowed several extensions on the landfill in their town, which takes most of the capital's garbage. The last extension passed on Dec. 31 and we still don't have an alternative.

Now we're told there will be a new landfill on Semirara Island in Antique to take Manila's wastes. There's even a contractor all set to go, except that the authorities forgot two requirements. First, the contractor still does not have an Environmental Compliance Certificate. Second, oops, they forgot to ask the people of Semirara, or at least did not consult with all concerned. Semirara, incidentally, is also the site of coal mining, which already gives residents enough headaches.

If we seem to drag our feet on issues like waste disposal, it seems the government has moved posthaste on another matter: Metro Manila, we are told, is getting a subway. The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) announced that they signed a memorandum of understanding "months ago" with Italian firms to construct the subway, which will initially consist of a 10-kilometer line connecting Ayala Avenue and Ortigas Center. Here's the proposed route: from the Edsa-Ayala intersection, the subway will run down Ayala and Buendia into the Sta. Ana area, crossing the Pasig and emerging at Welfareville in Mandaluyong, going through Shaw Boulevard, Greenhills and into the Ortigas Center.

Wow pare, bigat, yehey and all that. I don't know. Why another mass transport system for the financial districts when the LRT is falling apart, not to mention being bombed to high heavens, and the MRT remains uncompleted, its perpetual construction continuing to snarl traffic? Brace yourselves for more traffic gridlocks when the subway construction starts.

I just got a copy of the Federation of Chinese Chambers of Commerce's 2001 appointment book and I noticed for the third year running, that it has the full LRT/MRT system printed at the back. There was no subway on that map, but it is a dream route which, if ever completed, would run all the way up to Zapote in the south and Valenzuela and San Jose del Monte in the north. The P1.2-billion question (Erap has made us learn to think big) remains: When will this be completed?

The government stopped boasting about a completion date for the expanded LRT/MRT but it has one for the Ayala-Ortigas subway. The year 2004, we're told. Is it a coincidence, I wonder? If we're still stuck with Erap, then he can inaugurate it but we would have all been turned into paupers by then, so they better make sure the rides are for free, for everyone, forever.

* * *

Comments can be sent to miguel@pinoykasi.org

Getting back at Cory

THIS refers to the press statement of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) published in the INQUIRER last Dec. 17 accusing the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas as "defender of the stock distribution option (SDO)" when it denounced the DAR's probe on Hacienda Luisita.

We would like to remind the DAR that since the implementation of the sham Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) and the SDO, we have clearly and categorically registered our strong opposition to the program and called for the immediate distribution of Hacienda Luisita lands to the farmworkers.

If the DAR is sincere in investigating Hacienda Luisita, how can it explain the regular briefing received by the Office of the Press Secretary? This will be validated by the memorandum dated Dec. 11, 2000 signed by DAR head executive assistant Francisco J. Lara Jr. addressed to Press Secretary Ricardo Puno regarding the "Latest on DAR's Probe on Hacienda Luisita." Since when has the Office of the Press Secretary acted on legitimate agrarian cases?

Apparently, the DAR's call for a probe is part of the "God Save the King" plan focused on breaking the momentum of the broad united front of anti-Estrada forces. This enormous propaganda plan aims to create a favorable scenario for Estrada's acquittal and get the minds of the general public to accept a verdict of acquittal.

The DAR cannot fool the peasantry by saying that "the probe has nothing to do with President Corazon Aquino's involvement in street protests, but with justice for farmworkers and just simply acting on the legitimate complaints and demands of the hacienda workers." In fact, using the long standing legitimate and just demands of the farmworkers for Estrada's selfish political agenda is an evident injustice and exploitation of the farmworkers.

We challenge the DAR to probe the "corporative scheme" that hailed Danding Cojuangco as the "godfather of land reform" in the 4,361 hectares of Hacienda Pontevedra in Negros Occidental that transformed the so-called agrarian reform beneficiaries into mere salaried farmworkers. Tens of thousands of farmers are now about to be displaced in the more than 1,000 hectares of land owned by Greggy Araneta in Tungkong Mangga, San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, and the controversial 8,650 hectares of Hacienda Looc in Nasugbu, Batangas. These are only a few legitimate agrarian cases that need immediate response but have been continuously neglected by the DAR and the Estrada administration.

The only meaningful solution left for the peasantry and the Filipino people to end their suffering in a worsening economic and political crisis is to continue the long-term struggle for genuine land reform and national industrialization firmly linked to the struggle for the immediate ouster of Estrada from power toward the attainment of genuine freedom and democracy.—**RAFAEL MARIANO, chair, Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas, 82-C Masikap Extension St., Barangay Central, Quezon City**

Father Shay finally cleared

MY sincere thanks to the INQUIRER for the clear and excellent report on the dismissal of the false charge of rape and my vindication in the Dec. 20 issue. This was a countercharge sprung against me by the non-biological father of the child. He is a retired US serviceman. He refused to bring charges against his own adopted son and the houseboy.

The child first accused the two boys over a period of eight months to the authorities. Without the help of Filipino social workers, I was trying to bring them to justice and get them treatment. One of the teenagers admitted to the authorities that he had abused the child. Despite this and other evidence, it was I whom he charged based on fabricated evidence.

The eight-page dismissal, clearing my name, reviewed all the evidence offered by the complainant against me and concluded that it was "bereft of any solid foundation." It pointed to the child's many statements accusing the two teenagers as the likely culprits. It noted the child never accused me until eight months after she was back under the influence of the parents of the teenagers.

There is only one thing more painful and unjust than being falsely accused and framed with manufactured evidence, and that is to be convicted and wrongly punished. From this and from a court trial, I have been gratefully spared, since no probable cause was found to bring the complaint to court.

The false rape charge was most serious and elaborately planned. According to an investigation by the Commission on Human Rights, three foreigners persuaded the child to write an incriminating letter accusing me of the crime. One is a German bar operator, whom we had charged and who is on trial for obstruction of justice. The other is the retired US serviceman, the non-biological father of the child who is also the adoptive father of one of the teenagers accused by the child.

They brought the child, then 7 years old to the beach bar of the German to write the letter accusing me of the crime. An Australian clergyman, who is critical of our work, was there. According to the report, he helped the 7-year-old-child relax and encouraged her to write the incriminating letter. That was the evidence they used to accuse me. A child under duress made it under extraordinary circumstances, eight months after she complained that the two teenagers had abused her.

The foreigners and their backers knew that such a horrific accusation alone would be enough to damage my credibility and could also be used to force us at the People's Recovery, Empowerment and Development Assistance (Preda) Foundation to withdraw our charges against them. The bar operator wrote to us suggesting such a deal. We refused. The child is still in their power and we are trying to have the social welfare authorities in the Philippines take her into protective custody. The teenagers she accused need rehabilitation.

I am also very grateful that this work of the Preda defenders of children's rights and above all, the plight of the children, has been recognized internationally. A member of the British House of Parliament has nominated us for the Nobel Peace Prize. Last Dec. 10, we were honored to receive the German Human Rights Award of the City of Weimar. The Italian City of Ferrara has also awarded us the Human Rights Award for 2001.

From the beginning, Jaime Cardinal Sin, archbishop of Manila who knows our work, stood by me. He said in a letter to the justice secretary, "His commitment to the welfare of children has been a source of immense inspiration and edification for so many in the Catholic church. It is very unfortunate that such a charge has been leveled against him. I know he will be proven innocent in time."

The Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines, the Columban Fathers, Lord David Alton, many individuals, church and civic organizations around the world wrote statements and letters supporting us during this terrible ordeal. Their trust and solidarity with us have not been misplaced. All of us at the Preda Foundation extend our grateful appreciation for their support.—**FR. SHAY CULLEN, Preda Foundation, Upper Kalaklan, 2200 Olongapo City**

Ban on use of aliases not absolute

THIS is to clarify recent news reports that tended to place out of context the meaning of what Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura said about the use of fictitious names in the opening of bank accounts.

Buenaventura was responding to a general question during a radio interview as to whether the use of an alias or a fictitious name in opening a bank account is allowed by law. The governor said that there is no existing law, meaning banking law, that prohibits that. However, he also said that the bank where the account is opened must keep a record of the true identity of the owner of the alias.

This is consistent with Republic Act 6426, otherwise known as the Foreign Currency Deposit Act which explicitly allows the keeping of numbered accounts for the recording and servicing of a deposit. Circular 251, which was issued by the Monetary Board on July 7, 2000 was referring to this law when it said that unless otherwise prescribed under existing law (RA 6426) anonymous accounts or accounts under fictitious names should not be kept or allowed.

Mention was made in news reports about Article 178 of the Revised Penal Code and Commonwealth Act No. 142 as amended, both of which regulate the use of aliases.

Article 178 provides penalties for (a) publicly using of a fictitious name for the purpose of concealing a crime, evading the execution of a judgment, or causing damage, and (b) concealment by any person of his true name and other personal circumstances.

On the other hand, there is also Commonwealth Act No. 142, as amended by Republic Act No. 6085 (Regulating the Use of Aliases) which provides that, except only as a pseudonym for literary purposes and athletic events, it is unlawful for any person to use an alias, unless the same is duly recorded in the proper local civil registry.

What can be noted is that the above provisions allow the use of aliases under certain circumstances. Conversely stated, the use of aliases is not absolutely disallowed. It is also consistent with the statement of Buenaventura that there is no existing banking law prohibiting the use of aliases in deposit accounts.

The question of whether the conditions for the use of an alias are met would seem to be an entirely different matter.—**JUAN DE ZUNIGA JR., general counsel, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas**

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In the movies, villains die

JUST like in his movies, President Estrada says he's "so beaten up."

He should be. Because, in reality, the President does not play his role well.

President Estrada won acting awards by playing the hero—the champion of the downtrodden, of the dregs of the earth, of the workers and the peasants. In reality, he is the villain—where his biggest victims are those whose causes he protects in his movies.

In reality, Estrada is the subject of an impeachment case where pieces of evidence are rife that he had used his position, power and influence to amass wealth. In reality, he provides mansions to his several mistresses while the majority of farmers and urban poor are landless and homeless; he empties people's pockets by promoting lotto, bingo and *jueteng* while giving out millions of pesos in *balato* to a few favored friends. He bombs our Muslim brothers and sisters in Mindanao and militarizes the rest of the country, while he leads songs of praise in charismatic assemblies. He drinks, womanizes and gambles, while the country teeters on the brink of economic disaster. In reality, his role is clearly that of the villain's.

In the end, Estrada will not emerge as the winner because, just like in his movies, villains die.—**JULIE PO, secretary general, Concerned Artists of the Philippines**

Clinton, Arafat go into overtime talks

WASHINGTON—President Bill Clinton and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat began a second round of talks here late Tuesday after running into overtime in search of a Middle East peace deal.

After an initial White House meeting Tuesday went 30 minutes longer than anticipated, the two leaders met again at around 9:40 p.m. (10:40 a.m. Wednesday in Manila).

"It was a serious discussion," said White House spokesperson P.J. Crowley of the first meeting, which lasted more than two hours. "We expect the discussions to continue this evening."

CLINTON: Fingers crossed on Mideast peace prospects.

Arafat made no comments to reporters as he left and later returned to the White House.

Arafat came to Washington seeking clarification of Clinton's proposals made on Dec. 23 for resolving the deadlock in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians that has continued since the failed Camp David summit in July.

However, as Clinton and Arafat met in Washington, pessimism concerning prospects for peace gripped both Palestinians and Israelis.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak warned of the increased risk of war between Israel and the Arab countries, in light of the lack of hope for peace with the Palestinians and Syria.

"The risk of war is greater than it has been during the last three years," Barak told Israeli public television.

"That does not mean that a war is inevitable and that the Israelis must expect it," said Barak, who is also defense minister.

The theme of war was also raised on the Palestinian side with chief negotiator Yasser Abed Rabbo, who accompanied Arafat to Washington, describing as "an act of war" a plan by Barak to isolate Palestinian territories in the absence of a peace deal.

"The Palestinian National Authority warns of the catastrophic effects of a unilateral separation leading to an actual isolation of the Palestinian territories, and is considered as an act of war," he said in a statement.

The heated words were mirrored by violent confrontations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Palestinian and Israeli officials said.

Eight Palestinians and four Israelis were wounded Tuesday in a series of violent confrontations, while seven Palestinian civilians and two Israeli soldiers were hurt in an exchange of gunfire in Hebron, in the south of the West Bank.

Early Tuesday, a Palestinian farm worker was killed by Israeli soldiers, and two Israeli soldiers were wounded by bomb explosions in the Gaza Strip, one day after a car-bomb exploded, wounding 20 people north of Tel Aviv. *AFP*

Barak: Deal unlikely before Israeli polls

JERUSALEM—Prime Minister Ehud Barak said Tuesday he no longer believes a peace deal with the Palestinians is possible before Israel's Feb. 6 elections, and that he will now focus on suppressing Palestinian violence.

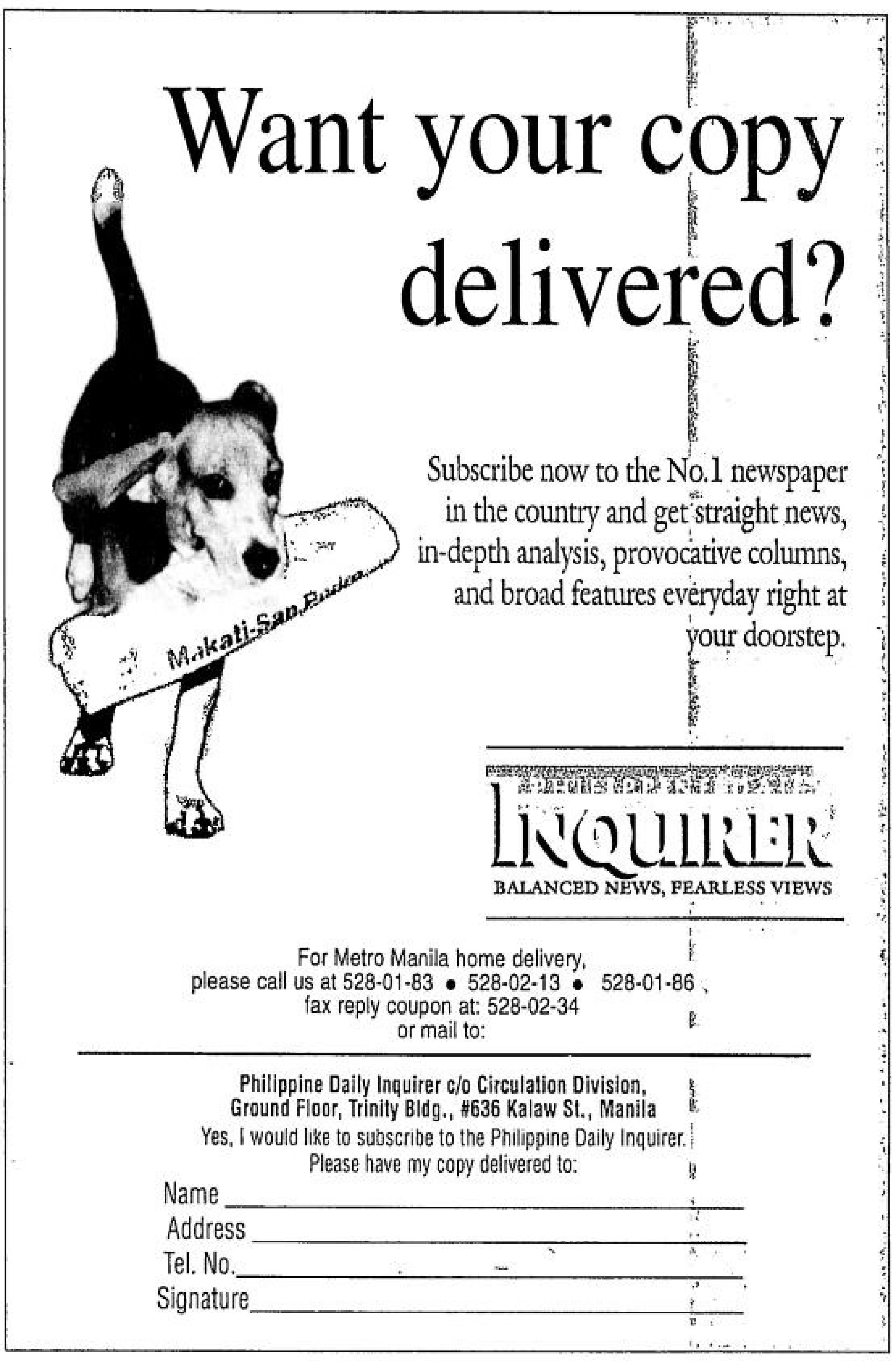
In a sign of the tougher policy, Israeli tanks blocked major roads in the Gaza Strip to Palestinian traffic, cutting the territory into three parts. Troops also tightened a blockade of West Bank towns that has been in effect since November.

Shortly after Barak announced his shift on evening newscasts, Palestinian gunmen ambushed Israeli motorists along a major highway straddling the invisible line between Israel and the West Bank. One Israeli was seriously wounded by a bullet to the head, and a second man less severely wounded.

Earlier in the day, in the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian farmer was killed by Israel troops guarding the Jewish settlement of Dugit. The troops opened fire after a roadside bomb near Dugit wounded an Israeli soldier. A second soldier was hurt in another explosion.

Near Gaza's Rafah crossing with Egypt, seven Palestinian pedestrians were wounded, two critically; by fire from Israeli soldiers when they tried to cross a street blocked by the Army, Palestinian officials said. Cross-fire in the area later Monday injured a Palestinian policeman, Palestinian officials said.

At night, an exchange of fire between Israeli tanks and Palestinians had Jewish settlers at Netzarim in the Gaza Strip taking shelter in their homes' reinforced rooms. The Israeli Army said their tanks fired shells in response to heavy Palestinian gunfire. There was no word of injuries. *AP*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28M in US not born in land, census says

WASHINGTON—America's foreign-born population swelled to more than 28.3 million last year, with the majority arriving from Latin America and Asia, new Census Bureau estimates being released Wednesday show.

The number of foreign-born residents in America was up from 26.4 million in 1999, the report said. About one of every 10 persons in America last year was born outside the country.

The estimates released Wednesday were based on an annual survey taken last March by the statistical agency, and were not results from Census 2000. Official Census 2000 numbers on foreign-born residents could be released by the end of this year.

A separate survey released Tuesday by the Center for Immigration Studies, based on census figures, found that while the biggest immigrant populations were in California, New York and Florida, states with fast-growing populations overall like Colorado, North Carolina and Nevada each experienced jumps of more than 180 percent since 1990.

The percentage of immigrants among Americans has increased steadily since 1970, from 4.7 percent to 10.4 percent in 2000, according to the center, a Washington-based think-tank that supports stricter controls on immigration.

Mark Mather, an analyst with the Population Reference Bureau, a nonprofit Washington research group, said that states along the coasts and with big urban centers continue to attract the most newcomers to America.

But, "the foreign-born population is increasing everywhere," Mather said. "They are moving out of the coastal areas, but it's a slow process."

About 37 percent of foreign-born residents were naturalized citizens, the Census Bureau said in its report. *AP*

China: Taiwan mini-links inadequate

BEIJING—Beijing Wednesday slammed the first official direct links with its bitter foe Taiwan in 51 years as inadequate and discriminatory, a day after Taipei opened the sea border.

"The so-called 'mini-three links' proposal is an utterly inadequate measure" for boosting economic and trade ties, Xu Shiquan, a leading Chinese policy expert told the English-language China Daily.

Under the scheme, a limited number of Taiwanese ferries will be allowed to sail directly to the southern Chinese ports of Xiamen and Fuzhou from the outlying Taiwanese islands of Matsu and Kinmen.

Up to 700 Chinese mainlanders will also be allowed to visit Jinmen and Matsu for up to seven days under the plan, but must travel on the Taiwanese boats.

Xu, director of the Institute of Taiwan Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said such limited transport, trade and postal connections fell short of "real and full" ties.

Because the links did not include traffic by mainland vessels to the outlying islands, they were "unilateral" and "discriminatory."

"How can you call such one-way traffic a direct two-way link?" Xu demanded, adding the move was a ploy to defuse growing calls in Taiwan and around the world for unrestricted links.

The daily said Xu's comments could be interpreted as being the "official" communist party line.

China has claimed sovereignty over Taiwan since it split from the mainland in 1949 at the end of a bloody nationalist-communist civil war and threatens to invade if the island moves toward formal independence.

In Taipei, Chen Chi-mai of the ruling pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party said Beijing's dissatisfaction reflected China's determination to refuse to allow Taipei "to play the biggest role in cross-Taiwan Strait ties."

The arrival of the three passenger boats Tuesday signaled Taipei's willingness to end decades of tensions which have simmered for half a century, he said.

It was also a sign that Taiwan would eventually lift its ban on direct trade, transport and investment on the mainland, Chen added.

Meanwhile, mainland national Chinese-language dailies all but ignored Tuesday's arrival of the three Taiwanese tourist boats. *AFP*

NEW YEAR BANG

REUTERS

Mexico's Popocatepetl volcano belches ash and steam late Jan. 1, 2001. The volcano has shown more activity only days after residents were permitted to return to their homes following a major eruption in mid-December.

Ex-Nazi guard to be tried for murder

MUNICH—An 88-year-old former Nazi SS prison guard, Anton Malloth, is to stand trial on charges of murdering prisoners at a concentration camp during World War II, officials said Tuesday.

Malloth, a notorious overseer in charge of the Gestapo's Theresienstadt prison camp in Czechoslovakia, faces one charge of attempted murder and three of murder, a spokesperson for the Munich prosecutor's office said.

The accused, who has been held in custody since May 2000, has denied or refused to respond to the charges.

An initial case brought against him by the Dortmund prosecutor's office was abandoned in April 1999 for lack of evidence.

But a fresh investigation was opened based on evidence from a witness in the Czech republic and has since gained additional weight through testimony from former prisoners, the prosecution said.

According to the new evidence, Malloth in September 1943 beat, shot and left for dead a Jewish prisoner who had hidden a cauliflower in his shirt while on a farm work detail.

In September 1944, he allegedly clubbed and trampled another Jewish prisoner who had failed to report his return from a work detail as required by the camp rules.

At the beginning of 1945, according to an eyewitness, Malloth and another guard ordered two prisoners to strip naked in the cold and a third one to hose them down with water until they both collapsed dead.

Malloth was condemned to death in his absence in Czechoslovakia in 1948 for the murder of hundreds of Jewish prisoners, but that verdict was quashed by a court in Prague in 1968 on procedural grounds.

Until his arrest in May, Malloth had been living in an old people's home at Pullach near Munich.

Malloth, who was nicknamed "Handsome Tony," is said to have been one of the most feared guards at the Theresienstadt camp, where he served the Third Reich from 1940 to 1945. *AFP*

Thailand battles 'greatest' foe: Corruption

BANGKOK—Health ministers order hospitals to buy medicine from specific companies at 10 times the market price.

Forestry officials fell teak forests for personal profit.

Politicians are forking out millions to buy votes in Saturday's general election.

Rarely does a day pass in Thailand without a scandal rearing up in the public and private sectors.

Doctors let patients die so they can remove the kidneys for sale.

Engineers are bribed to certify buildings that later collapse and kill. Buddhist monks embezzle money donated by the faithful to their temples.

"Corruption is devastating. It is the source of most of our society's ills. It is our nation's greatest enemy," says Krikkiat Pipatseritham, commissioner of the National Counter Corruption Commission.

The good news is that more Thais are willing to fight the monster, and are scoring their first major victories. Some analysts even venture that Thailand has moved to the forefront of Asia's battle against corruption.

A few years ago a man like Thaksin Shinawatra, the mega-rich, leading contender for the prime minister's job, would have been regarded as untouchable.

But last week the NCCC found Thaksin guilty of trying to hide assets by transferring shares in his own companies to his maid and driver. This could bar him from politics.

Last August, Interior Minister Sanan Kachornprasart became the first major political figure ousted for corruption by legal means.

Local media hailed it as "a revolution."

Weaponry used to knock down the likes of Thaksin and Sanan includes the 1997 reformist Constitution, which spawned institutions like the NCCC. No longer is corruption automatically shrugged off with a helpless sigh of "This is the Thai way."

"That' what we wanted from the new Constitution and that' what we got," says Chulalongkorn University's Nualnoi Treerat of the verdict against Thaksin, who awaits a final Constitutional Court ruling on his case.

But in an interview, the economist said Thailand still had a way to go.

"Many Thais think the Thaksin case is the end of the story, but it' just the beginning," he said. "They don't want to make the effort to support the law. If you have a new institution you must support it until it becomes strong."

And the forces of anti-corruption are hardly that.

Despite the recognized fact that grossly corrupt politicians and businessmen precipitated Thailand's 1997 economic crisis, one that may have cost the country as much as $52 billion, not a single major player has been brought to justice.

Transparency International, whose Corruption Perception Index tracks the problem worldwide, indicates that graft in Thailand is actually greater than before the mid-1997 crisis.

The election may be viewed as another step toward transparent democracy. A tough Election Commission is prepared to disqualify cheaters. But pre-balloting misdeeds, some of devilish ingenuity, have proved as widespread as ever, and there's no possible victor on the horizon who could really sweep the house clean.

Should Thaksin wriggle out of trouble and win the election, many fear old-style money politics would bounce back. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, his main rid for money politics," he said in a telephone interview. "They're kind of leading the pack."

But nobody is declaring victory.

"It's like two people wrestling in the front seat of a car for control of the wheel," he says, adding. "But at least there are two people in the front seat." *AP*

13-year-old girl among disco fire victims

RELATIVES burn candles on Jan. 2 in memory of the youngsters who died in a fire in the disco-bar "het Hemeltje"(Little Heaven) in Volendam in the early morning of New Year's Eve. REUTERS

VOLENDAM, Netherlands—A 13-year-old girl was among at least nine people who died when a top-floor disco in a harborside party complex burst into flames during a New Year's celebration, officials said Tuesday.

Mayor Frank IJsselmuiden told reporters the girl died in a hospital Monday evening and another severely burned victim died Tuesday. He warned the death toll could rise further with 17 people in critical condition.

IJsselmuiden said nine people died in the fire. But Dutch television quoted a doctor at the main trauma center north of Amsterdam insisting the death toll was ten. The report blamed the discrepancy on poor communications between the crisis teams.

More than 180 people were injured, with 90 hospitalized at burn centers across the Netherlands, and in Belgium and Germany.

The names of the dead, all under 25 years old, were published in the churches of this Roman Catholic fishing village, where everyone knew someone at the crowded party in the Little Heaven disco, located in a three-story wooden house.

Queen Beatrix and Vice Prime Minister Annemarie Jorritsma spent two hours—double their scheduled time—consoling victims at the Amsterdam University Medical Center, where'11 victims were clinging to life in intensive care. *AP*

42 immigrants still missing from shipwreck

ANKARA, Turkey—A Turkish helicopter crew on Tuesday spotted an exhausted shipwreck survivor waving from the rocks of a deserted bay just as rescue crews were losing hope of finding any more of 42 people missing from a day-old shipwreck.

Earlier in the day, body parts were discovered washing up on the beaches and authorities said divers had concluded that there is no longer any air in the cargo hold of the wrecked ship where most of the illegal immigrants were believed to have been.

The death toll from the wreck of the Georgian flagged Pati rose to eight Tuesday after two more bodies were discovered. The cargo ship, carrying illegal immigrants to Greece hit rocks and split in half Monday in a storm in which waves reached as high as five meters.

Turkish divers did not enter the sunken part of the ship, saying it was too risky. Capt. Can Karaca, the Coast Guard official directing rescue operations, said the rescue efforts were called off Tuesday afternoon because of high seas.

An exhausted Abukalam Ajad was spotted Tuesday by a Navy helicopter, which radioed to Navy frogmen to rescue him.

The Bangladeshi man had apparently swam from the ship to a bay about one and a half kilometers away. He was rushed to a hospital and was reportedly in good condition.

"I thought I had died. I thank God I was given a new life," Ajad told private television NTV from his hospital bed.

Ajad's rescue brought the number of known survivors to 33.

At least 83 people—10 crew members and 73 passengers—were on board the cargo ship. The refugees also included Moroccans, Pakistanis, Indians and Afghans.

Police officers have been picking up body parts, which washed ashore on the beaches, the Anatolia news agency reported. The remains were believed to be from people who were dismembered during the accident. *AP*

Labradors jump gleefully in pond to herd trout

TURNWOOD, New York—The dogs pace the banks eagerly. They yelp in anticipation. They paw the ice gingerly and bark madly as their quarry scatters in every direction.

Finally, on cue from their owner, they plunge into the water and begin their task: herding thousands of darting, shimmering trout.

Their names are Kayla and Maggie. At the Beaverkill Trout hatchery in the heart of the Catskill mountains, where the Shavers have been trout-farming for generations, they are known as the world's only trout-herding dogs.

"C'mon Kayla, C'mon Maggie," owner Lisa Shaver cries, wading hip-deep through the pond in a neoprene jumpsuit, pushing the ice aside so the dogs can work better. Behind her, she drags an 18-meter net with weights on the bottom and floats on top.

The trout take off in a frenzy in the other direction—goldens, rainbows, brooks and browns. Determinedly, the two Labrador retrievers swim after them, one on each side of the pond, corralling the swarm, driving it toward the net. As they do, Shaver pulls the two ends of the net together, tightening it into a large floating noose of glistening, leaping fish.

The dogs paddle furiously around the edge, heads bobbing in the water, ready to catch any trout that try to escape.

"They are doing what they love, which is to swim and herd and retrieve," Shaver says. "And they are cutting our work-time in half."

The hatchery is a sprawling 100-hectare complex of ponds and channels, barns and buildings set in the deeply wooded Beaverkill valley. The Shavers, who also own a hatchery in Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania, hatch and raise about 500,000 trout a year, selling 150,000 to stock rivers and ponds all over New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Shaver, 31, lives on the farm with her husband and three children in the house that once belonged to her great-grandparents. A few yards away, is the pale blue house where her parents, Betty and Gary, live and where she grew up. Her grandmother, sister and brother also live on the property. Everyone works the trout farm, especially in the busy season in spring and summer.

Kayla, a black Lab, is a veteran. Shaver first noticed her herding tendencies as a puppy, when she would dive into the ponds during the busy season and happily swim alongside the crew. It didn't take long to realize she was better at the job than most humans. Now 13, Kayla has been herding trout most of her life. She works with the skill and pride of a pro.

The dog world has rarely seen anything like her.

"Amazing," says Bill Speck, vice president for performance events for American Kennel Club, and a former breeder and judge of labs. "I've heard of taking labs duck-hunting, and they can be good at herding livestock—but trout!"

Kayla's old bones are beginning to ache and soon it will be time to retire. Last year she began training her successor, Maggie, a playful, rambunctious, 2-year-old yellow Lab.

Maggie took to her task with all the exuberance of youth, although, on this particular December morning, she's a bit spooked by the ice. Shaver has to coax and plead with her to get her into the water.

Corralling is only part of the dogs' job. They also help control that, zigzagging toward the chute, where water flows from the neighboring pond.

"The chute, Maggie. Up the chute," Shaver cries.

Maggie hesitates for a moment, eyeing the ice from the bank. Then she's off, bounding into the water, paddling toward the basin beneath the chute, nudging the errant fish back into the pond.

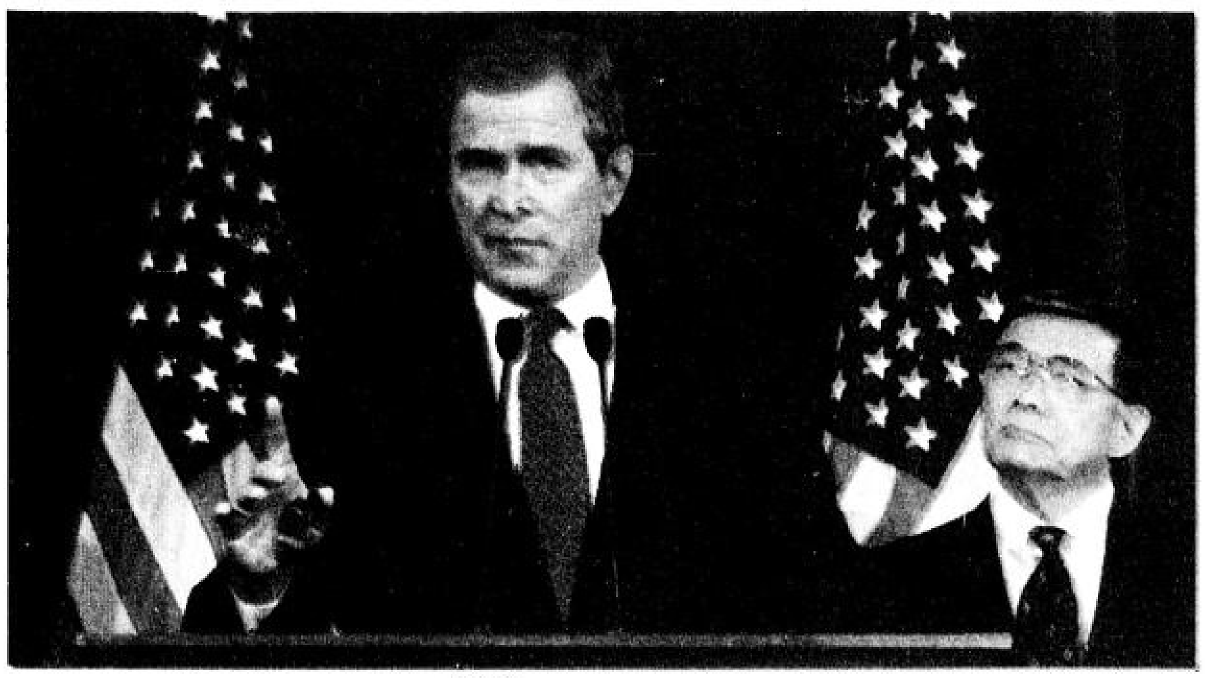
"Good girl, Maggie, good girl."

High from the branches of a big old cherry tree, two bald eagles watch the scene. As soon as the dogs are gone, they'll swoop down for a meal, picking their choice from the 36 ponds. The birds devour one or two trout a day—with the blessing of the Shavers.

"They are so beautiful," Shaver says, "how could you refuse?"

Black bears are another matter. Unlike bald eagles, bears are gluttons, destroying everything in sight to get to their grub. *AP*

Bush completes Cabinet with key additions



REUTERS

US President-elect Geroge W. Bush takes questions from the press after naming current Secretary of Commerce Norman Mineta (right) as his new secretary of transportation Jan. 2.

AUSTIN—US President-elect George W. Bush rounded out his Cabinet Tuesday, giving key portfolios to an Arab-American, an Asian-American and an Hispanic.

"This is a team of people who will be dedicated to doing what is right for America," Bush said at a press conference here, adding that his Cabinet was "one of the strongest that any president has been ever able to assemble."

He also fulfilled a long-time promise to include in his Cabinet a Democrat by naming as transportation secretary Norman Mineta, a 69-year-old Asian-American who is serving as commerce secretary in President Bill Clinton's administration.

A son of Japanese-Americans who were interned during World War II, Mineta began his public career as mayor of the city of San Jose, California, and then served in the House of Representatives for 21 years.

After leaving Congress in 1995, Mineta went to work for Lockheed Martin, a major defense contractor.

"Secretary Mineta would bring a lot of experience to the job," said Bush.

"He made a reputation in the halls of Congress as someone who understands that a sound infrastructure in America will lead to economic opportunity for all Americans," added the president-elect.

Linda Chavez, 53, a conservative columnist who headed the US Commission on Civil Rights in the Reagan administration, was nominated as labor secretary.

Bush called Chavez "smart and capable."

"We share a passion to make sure that nobody in America is left behind," he added.

Former US senator Spencer Abraham of Michigan, a grandson of immigrants from Lebanon, was appointed secretary of energy.

Abraham was defeated in a tough election battle earlier this year by Democratic Congresswoman Debbie Stabenow.

He studied at Harvard Law School and served in the administration of George Bush the elder as deputy chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle.

"He's ready to join me in seeking energy security for the United States," the president-elect said of Abraham.

By naming the three remaining Cabinet secretaries, Bush largely concluded forming his Cabinet, which now has representatives of the African-American, Asian and Hispanic communities as well as several prominent women.

All nominees will have to be confirmed by the Senate, a process that is expected to begin as early as Thursday, when the Senate Commerce Committee is scheduled to hold hearings on the candidacy of Don Evans, the commerce secretary-designate, according to Ari Fleischer, a spokesman for the Bush transition team.

So far, Bush's choice for attorney general, John Ashcroft, has emerged as the most controversial nomination. Ashcroft is likely to face tough questioning during his confirmation hearing. *AFP*

Egypt traders defy embargo, fly to Baghdad

BAGHDAD—An EgyptAir plane carrying mainly businessmen arrived Tuesday in Baghdad in a show of solidarity with Iraq, which has been under a UN embargo since 1990, an aviation source said.

Doctors and artists were also on board the plane, which landed in the Iraqi capital at around 1800 GMT (2 a.m. Wednesday in Manila).

An EgyptAir official recently announced that the company planned to open a charter link to Baghdad after the Eid al-Fitr feast marking the end of Ramadan, which was celebrated at the end of December.

Egypt has organized several humanitarian flights to Iraq in the past two months. An earlier EgyptAir flight brought doctors and artists to Baghdad on Dec. 22.

Relations between Egypt and Iraq have recently improved sharply. On Nov. 7, the two countries agreed to restore charges d'affaires, one grade below ambassador, to their respective capitals..

The two countries had severed bilateral ties after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

In recent months, dozens of planes have landed in Baghdad, including flights from Russia, China and France, who do not share the US and British interpretation of the scope of the UN air embargo. *AFP*

Law on K. Rouge trial seen as not leading to unrest

PHNOM PENH—Cambodia's fragile stability will not be immediately threatened by the passage of a law to try leaders of the Khmer Rouge, even though many suspects still command the loyalty of armed remnants of the murderous movement, officials and observers said Wednesday.

They say it may be some time, perhaps several years, before the trial is convened and the most powerful former Khmer Rouge now are younger commanders and political leaders who likely will not be targeted by the court.

Former Khmer Rouge themselves told The Associated Press to expect little response from the former guerrillas—for now.

Cambodia's National Assembly Tuesday passed the draft law 92-0.

However, several steps remain before a court is set up, including the signing of an agreement with the United Nations which has been pressing for the tribunal.

Nonetheless, the vote was the most substantial signal the government finally has serious intentions about bringing Khmer Rouge leaders to justice for the first time since they were driven from power 21 years ago.

Prime Minister Hun Sen has regularly warned that efforts to try surviving Khmer Rouge leadership could lead to unrest. The last remnants of the Khmer Rouge's army agreed to put down their arms in late 1998, ending some 20 years of guerrilla warfare with Phnom Penh.

Pailin Gov. Y Chhien, a Khmer Rouge military commander until his defection in 1996, cautioned that "problems" would arise only if the law threatened "national reconciliation."

"If the law does not impact solidarity and national reconciliation, then there is no problem and there will be no terrorist acts," Y Chhien said in a telephone interview.

Pailin First Deputy Gov. Ieng Vuth, the son of Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith, two senior Khmer Rouge leaders who could stand trial, played down the importance of the Assembly's vote.

"I don't want to make a comment on the law because this is a job of the government," Ieng Vuth said. "I am just a simple government employee."

Hun Sen's military commanders said they did not fear retaliation from former Khmer Rouge leaders.

"We are not concerned about unrest now, or even when Khmer Rouge leaders are brought to the court, as long as the court officials follow the law," said Lt. Gen. Neang Phat, a defense ministry spokesperson.

Some diplomats said tension would probably be heightened only when it was known who would be brought to trience rocked the capital, but was quickly put down by government forces and blamed on an obscure band of anti-communist Cambodian-Americans.

Government officials said the violence was not related to efforts to bring Khmer Rouge leaders to justice. *AP*

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Across the NATION

TONY BERGONIA, Assistant Editor

Cracks prompt probe of Davao infra

DAVAO CITY—Public works and local engineering officials are conducting a thorough inspection of buildings, roads and bridges in Southern Mindanao as several structures suffered cracks following the series of strong earthquakes here.

Cracks were seen in the concrete walls and the ceiling of the multimillion-peso city council building and the two-year-old Social Security System center here.

Even media offices were not spared.

The walls of the dressing room of the ABS-CBN television station on Shrine Hills here suffered cracks measuring about an eighth of an inch.

There were also cracks on the façade of the building being rented by TV station GMA-5 along Ramon Magsaysay Avenue here.

Parts of the concrete stairs in the five-level car park of the Gaisano Mall of Davao were chipped off while several of its glass blocks were broken during the quake.

The concrete walls and the ceilings of the first, second and third floors of the Davao Oriental Provincial Hospital also suffered cracks.

Several owners of low-cost housing units in Davao City complained that the quake caused some cracks in the walls of their houses.

Engineer Emilio Peralta, regional chief of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) maintenance division, said the Davao Oriental provincial district engineering office also reported several cracks at the Sumlog Bridge in Lupon, Davao Oriental.

Peralta, however, said the bridge is still passable since the damage was not structural in nature.

But the bridge would still need immediate repair to ensure the safety of motorists, he said.

Peralta said initial reports from the other district engineering offices in the region indicated no substantial damage on infrastructure in areas under the offices' jurisdiction.

But he said they have instructed district engineers to make a detailed assessment of the state of the structural designs of all infrastructure in their areas to determine if the quakes had caused stress.

He said they expect the inspection and the report of government engineers to be completed in a week.

Engineer Joaquin Cui, acting chief of the City Engineering Office (CEO), also organized three teams of inspectors to conduct a thorough inspection of the impact of the quakes on various private and government-owned buildings in the city.

Cui gave his staff until today to complete the inspection.

The earthquakes, triggered by ground movements along the Philippine Trench, struck several areas in Eastern and Northern Mindanao and the southern parts of the Visayas on Dec. 31, Jan. 1 and 2.

But the tremors were felt more strongly in Mati, Davao Oriental and in this city since these areas are near the epicenter of the three quakes.

The Dec. 31 quake registered a magnitude of 5.5 on the Richter scale with the epicenter located at sea, some 135 kilometers east of Tandag, Surigao del Sur, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs).

The New Year's day quake struck at 2:57 p.m. registering a magnitude of 6.6. The Phivolcs located the quake's epicenter at sea, 65 kilometers southeast of Mati.

On Tuesday, another earthquake with a magnitude of 6.2 struck at 3:30 p.m. with its epicenter at sea, some 117 kilometers southeast of Mati.

The quakes were felt in the provinces of Davao Oriental, Davao del Norte, Compostela Valley, Surigao del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Misamis Oriental and Lanao del Norte and in the cities of Davao, Kidapawan, General Santos, Cotabato, Cagayan de Oro, Butuan, Surigao and Cebu. *Jowel Canuday, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Waste foes slam Metro execs for threats

SAN JOSE, Antique—The United Antiqueños, a group opposing the sanitary landfill project on Semirara Island, questioned the Metro Manila Development Authority's (MMDA) legal threats against the judge who issued a temporary restraining order against the project.

MMDA lawyers were quoted over the weekend as saying that Executive Judge Nery Duremdes of the Antique Regional Trial Court could be suspended as the 72-hour TRO he issued on Dec. 29 violated Republic Act 8975, a new law prohibiting the issuance of TROs on government projects.

President Estrada signed the new law on Nov. 7. Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. issued an administrative circular on Nov. 11 informing lower court judges that they will be suspended for 60 days without pay if they issued TROs against government infrastructure projects.

Gideon Javier, convenor of the United Antiqueños, said threats of having the judge suspended have no basis since the landfill project on Semirara is not an infrastructure project but an open pit garbage dump.

"Besides, it is a city problem and not a national problem. And, it is certainly not an infrastructure project," said Javier in a telephone interview.

Under RA 8975, only the Supreme Court has the power to stop government infrastructure projects.

Duremdes acted on a petition for injunction filed on Dec. 21 by Javier and the United Antiqueños.

The petition was filed by the United Antiqueños amid reports that the MMDA will ship Metro Manila's garbage to Semirara Island following the closure of Metro Manila's dump in San Mateo, Rizal on Dec. 31. *Hazel Villa, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Gunmen bid bye to 2000 with killings

COTABATO CITY—Five persons were killed in two ambuscades in Sultan Kudarat province in the last two hours of year 2000.

Supt. Agapito Salvador, Sultan Kudarat police chief, said unidentified gunmen fired Armalite rifles at two tricycles in Barangay Sinapulay, President Quirino town at 11:30 p.m. on Dec. 31, killing Dominador Santiago, Joel Santiago, Arnold Gatchalian and Reynaldo Agustin, all residents of Tacurong City.

The victims were on their way home from a party.

Earlier, at around 10 p.m. in Lambayong town, also in Sultan Kudarat, armed men ambushed a truck loaded with churchgoers in Barangay Veterans, wounding Pastor Dionisio Bautista and his wife Virginia, Elizabeth Advincula, Almira Antonio and Cafgu member Narciso Sablay.

Sablay fired back, killing one of the suspects.

Police recovered an M-14 rifle from the slain suspect who remains unidentified.

Capt. Ricardo Ellorda, acting spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division, said some 50 suspected MILF rebels attacked a militia detachment in Barangay Cross Salvo in Datu Piang, Maguindanao at 1 a.m. on New Year's day.

Wounded in the 30-minute firefight were Pay Lakin, 20, wife of a militiaman, and their son Kapel, 8. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

War, tragedies, deaths pester promised land

BY THE PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

YEARENDER

WHEN Estrada declared his all-out war against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte five days after the alleged takeover of the town hall by the MILF, Bukidnon Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri in Metro Manila warned that the government's P998.5 million calamity fund for 1999—the lowest in a decade—may run out sooner than expected as a refugee crisis loomed in Mindanao.

Zubiri said Congress allocated the fund mainly with typhoons and floods in mind and not an "all-out war."

He cautioned the Estrada administration against intensifying military operations against the MILF without first ensuring that civilian agencies were prepared to house and feed thousands of families who would be displaced.

As events would prove later, Zubiri's warning was correct.

But it was not heeded.

As early as May, evacuees depended on non-government organizations to survive.

The government's help was very minimal.

The cost of war:

- Millions of pesos spent on bullets and bombs and other war material.
- Heavy drop in tourism and investments in Mindanao and the rest of the country.
- Heavy drop in income or loss of jobs among low-income earners in Mindanao.
- Cancellation of national conventions in key cities in Mindanao.
- More than half a million Mindanaoans displaced.
- As of Dec. 4 last year, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reported that 190,166 persons were still housed in evacuation centers.
- At least 300 evacuees, mostly children, never made it back home—they died in the evacuation centers.
- More civilians died in the congested evacuation centers from preventable diseases than in the crossfire between government forces and the MILF.
- An estimated 8,344 houses were either destroyed or damaged by the war in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat; 6,229 of them destroyed while 2,115 were damaged, the DSWD reported.
- Hundreds of soldiers and MILF guerrillas killed.
- Thousands of children orphaned.

But more than the deaths and displacement, Mr. Estrada's all-out war jeopardized the prospects for peace in Mindanao and destroyed the social fabric that had been nurtured for decades after the 1970s war.

The government scored a military victory, Mr. Estrada's popularity soared to unprecedented heights, but the war did not bring about what it sought to deliver: peace.

Today, thousands of evacuees still long to return to their villages while those who returned are still awaiting the government's promised rehabilitation.

Mr. Estrada had announced that millions of pesos would be allocated to war-ravaged areas for rehabilitation but the year ended with the promise remaining a promise for most war victims.

In Barangay Pikit, North Cotabato, a hundred fishermen were given only a small banca for livelihood.

Bombings

Eighty-two persons were killed and 363 others were wounded in 110 bombings in various parts of Mindanao from January to December.

Most of the bombings occurred in May and June, at the height of the war against the MILF.

But the worst case of bombing occurred before Mr. Estrada's all-out war—the MV Mediatrix ferry bombing on Feb. 25 which killed 39 persons and injured 41 others, mostly suffering from second and third degree burns.

The military blamed the bombing on the MILF; the MILF denied it had anything to do with it.

The ferry was about to dock at the port from a 15-minute cruise across the Panguil Bay in Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte when two homemade incendiary bombs exploded inside the two air-conditioned buses aboard the ferry.

Most of the victims who either died instantly or expired at the hospital hours later were badly burned.

Sources at the city prosecutor's office have expressed grave concern over the possibility that the cases filed against two suspects would be dismissed by a local court.

Of the six hearing days, the prosecution managed only to present three witnesses who even failed to identify suspects Allan Saumay, 42, alias Commander Mercado, and Amanodin Dimalna, 21, as the persons who bombed the two buses aboard the ferry.

Kidnappings

From Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 144 persons were kidnapped, including 21 persons abducted in Sipadan, Sabah but brought to Sulu.

Ten persons remain in captivity, including the last Sipadan hostage, Filipino Roland Ullah and American Jeffrey Schilling.

On March 20, the Al-Islamiya Al-Harakatul, the new name adopted by the Abu Sayyaf under the leadership of Khaddafy Janjalani, abducted 78 teachers, a priest, and students in the towns of Tumahubong and Sumisip in Basilan.

Eighteen Muslims among the hostages were immediately freed, the rest held hostage.

The Abu Sayyaf demanded the release of three international terrorists, the removal of two big crosses in Lamitan and Isabela as well as the implementation of Islamic laws in Basilan.

A "final option" was agreed upon by the Basilan Crisis Committee in the last week of April.

Four kidnap victims were killed in the course of the operations: Fr. Rhoel Gallardo and three teachers. Ten kidnapped students were wounded.

Twenty-eight soldiers, militiamen and civilian volunteers were killed, 60 soldiers were wounded.

The military recovered 55 hostages in six separate operations in Maluso, Lantawan and Sumisip.

Sipadan hostages

On Easter Sunday, April 23, 10 foreign tourists and 11 resort employees were abducted from a diving resort on Sipadan Island, Malaysia by the Abu Sayyaf.

The hostages were transported by speedboat to Jolo Island, there to spend over four months in what many of them would later on describe as a "hell-hole."

In between, through muddled and protracted negotiations, the obstinacy of the bandit group's leaders and sporadic attacks by the military, the Abu Sayyaf abducted or detained several others, almost all of them in the month of July, but all of them on a Sunday.

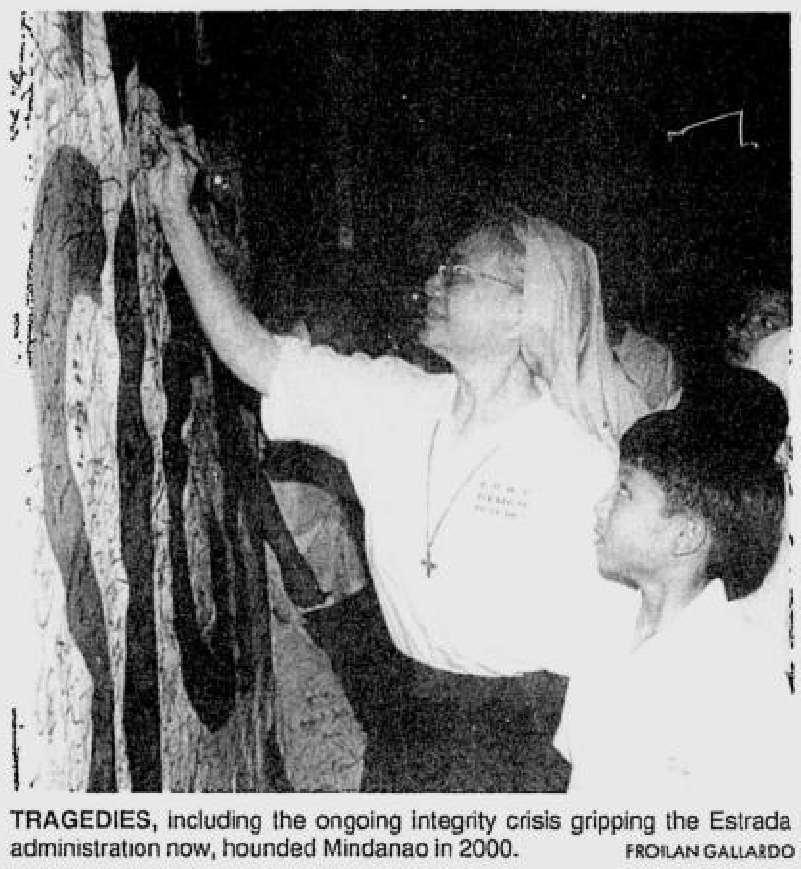
After protracted negotiations and millions of dollars in ransom reportedly paid by Libya, negotiators Secretary Robert Aventajado, former Libyan Ambassador Abdul Rajab Azzarouq, Dr. Parouk Moh. Hussin, Gov. Abdusakur Tan and other emissaries were able to secure the release of 20 of the Sipadan hostages and the other abducted foreigners.

On Sept. 16, President Estrada ordered the launching of massive military operations on known Abu Sayyaf lairs to rescue the remaining hostages.

Five battalions of Army and Marine soldiers came by air and sea and by the break of dawn ground troops had been deployed and the island reverberated with the sound of bombs and howitzers.

On the same day, communication and transportation were cut off and a news blackout was imposed on the island.

As a result of the relentless air, sea and ground offensive, the remaining French TV journalists, 12 evangelists and the three Malaysians from Pandanan either escaped or were rescued by the military, amid charges of human rights violations.



TRAGEDIES, including the ongoing integrity crisis gripping the Estrada administration now, hounded Mindanao in 2000. FROILAN GALLARDO

Scores of civilians were killed, several disappearances were reported and homes were burned. Motor vehicles and small seacraft were allegedly confiscated or destroyed, followed by the search for and seizure of unlicensed firearms.

Today, only Filipino Roland Ullah and an American, Jeffrey Schilling, remain in the hands of the Abu Sayyaf but latest developments indicate that Schilling connived with his alleged abductors to make it appear he had been kidnapped.

The expected ransom of $10 million was reportedly intended to close an arms deal between Schilling and the bandit group led by Sabaya.

As a result of the operations, over 200 Abu Sayyaf were reported killed, some 300 surrendered, hundreds of high-powered firearms confiscated, scores of vehicles and sea craft seized, and an undetermined number of civilians dead.

But known Abu Sayyaf leaders Galid Andang alias Commander Robot, Mujib Susukan, Nadzmie Saabdullah alias Commander Global, Abu Pula Jumdail, Radulan Sahiron, Ahmad Salayuddin alias Abu Sabaya, and the youngest brother of the group's founder, Khaddafy Janjalani, are still somewhere in the jungles of the island, biding their time.

Still in captivity

Enrico Rico Pelaez, a bank official and son of former Vice President Emmanuel Pelaez, was abducted in Barangay Gusa, Cagayan de Oro City on Nov. 23.

He remains in captivity.

Also in captivity are John Erick Agustin, 5, abducted in Libungan, North Cotabato on Nov. 28, and the alleged brides of Commander Robot: Nelsa Bassal Aga, Marissa Adjad, Harta Sahali.

Still held are rubber plantation owner Gernaro Torqueza and driver Adelino Agalano who were abducted on Feb. 29 in Matalam, North Cotabato and Marilyn Tiu, abducted Nov. 28 in Alicia, Zamboanga del Sur.

Transportation disasters

At least 417 persons were killed in major land, sea and air disasters last year.

On April 12, 148 persons died in the ML Annahada tragedy in Sulu.

A week later, on April 19, all 131 passengers and crew of Air Philippines Flight 2P541 died when the plane crashed in the Island Garden City of Samal.

On Christmas Day, at least 38 persons were killed in a bus crash in Kinuskusan, Bansalan, Davao del Sur.

Pardoned

On Feb. 1, reports from North Cotabato indicated that Norberto Manero Jr. alias Commander Bucay, sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of Italian priest Tullio Favali in Tulunan, North Cotabato on April 11, 1985 was discovered to have been pardoned by President Estrada in December

Manero was meted out prison terms for burning the motorcycle of the priest and evasion of sentence when he escaped from prison in 1992.

His pardon triggered protests nationwide. It was eventually revoked and he was sent back to jail in Sarangani province for the 1977 murder of the Mamalumpong brothers.

Last month, however, the key witness in the murder of the brothers Johanna, sister of the victim, recanted her testimony

Hijack

On May 25, right smack into the military-MILF war and the bombings in Mindanao and Metro Manila, a Philippine Airlines jet with 278 passengers and 13 crewmembers bound for Manila from Davao was hijacked by a man later identified as Reginald Trance Chua.

Chua breached tight security measures put up by aviation security forces at the Davao airport, slipping in a grenade and a gun into PAL's Flight PR 812

Chua's identity initially baffled police investigators as he used the name Augusto Lakandula in securing his ticket.

The plane was about to land at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila after a 90-minute flight from Davao City when Chua declared a hijack and demanded that passengers hand him over their cash, pieces of jewelry and other belongings.

Chua bailed out of the plane over Antipolo town in Metro Manila but plunged to his death when a parachute he himself made failed to open.

NBI investigation, however, ruled out any involvement of any rebel or terrorist organizations in the hijack.

The NBI said Chua, son of a prominent family in Bangkal, Matanao town, Davao del Sur, was an emotionally disturbed person who failed to cope with the murder of his father in 1992 in his hometown in Matanao, Davao del Sur.

Protest

Religious leaders led by Surigao City Bishop Miguel Cinches protested the operation of a gold and copper mining firm in Placer, Surigao del Norte for alleged violations of environmental laws.

In a joint investigation by the Senate and House committee on natural resources on Aug. 12, Bishop Cinches urged Congress to stop the operation of the Manila Mining Corporation (MMC), saying "we cannot compromise livelihood at the cost of lives."

Fr. Ricardo Virtudazo, parish priest of Placer, alleged that the MMC operates with an expired permit.

Placer residents led by Msgr. Terry Iral, director of the Surigao Social Action Center, staged a picket-rally at the main gate of the MMC for almost a month to pressure the firm to comply with environmental laws.

It was the first Church-backed mass action in Surigao City after the Edsa revolt.

Journalist murdered

On Nov. 17, Olimpio Jalapit Jr., Pagadian City's hardest hitting radio commentator, was gunned down by motorcycle-riding men, about an hour after he received a death threat on his cell phone.

Jalapit, a staunch critic of President Estrada and Environment Secretary Antonio Cerilles, hosted a daily morning show on Radio Mindanao Network's dxPR.

He was gunned down after attending a PTA meeting and while on the way to the house of Cerilles' wife, Rep. Aurora Cerilles, for a meeting.

The NBI is looking into the possible involvement of at least seven groups in the murder of Jalapit—among them the Cerilleses, a candidate for town mayor in Zamboanga del Sur under LAMP and an opposition politician, men in uniform, a drug syndicate and operators of illegal gambling and the MILF.

Investigators, however, are convinced that Jalapit was killed either due to politics or illegal drugs.

Typhoon

Typhoon Toyang hit the Caraga region on Nov. 23, leaving at least 23 people, mostly children, dead.

Damage to crops and infrastructure were estimated at P142.7 million.

Fifteen persons, including a 10-month-old boy, were buried alive in two separate landslides in Barangay Plaridel in San Jose town and Barangay Matingbo in Libjo, both on Dinagat Island, Surigao del Norte. They earlier fled to the foot of a hill in Sitio San Pedro from their coastal village in Plaridel.

Close to 600 hectares of farms were under water in 54 barangays in 11 towns.

At least 632 houses were destroyed while 5,512 others suffered damages in Agusan del Norte, Surigao City and Surigao del Norte.

Mistaken identity

Mistaking the Manila-bred, English-speaking 16-year-old Mohamad Nazrollah Dimaporo for a wealthy Iliganon, criminals commandeered the boy's Honda car, stabbed him 18 times and, thinking he was dead, dumped the boy's bloodied body in nearby Balo-i town.

Nazrollah turned out to be the son of the couple Abdullah and Imelda Quibranza Dimaporo, former governor and governor, respectively, of Lanao del Norte. The boy is also grandson of Mohamad Ali Dimaporo.

In no time, word of the frustrated murder and car theft spread all over Lanao del Sur, thanks to the proliferation of cell phones and transceiver radios. The suspects were arrested and the vehicle recovered in less than 24 hours.

The suspects were lynched by Dimaporo sympathizers in Marawi City, but the Dimaporos intervened and brought the suspects to the capital town of Tubod where they were to be tried for their crimes.

It was too late for one of the suspects, who died shortly after of "heart attack." The other two were also hospitalized.

Innocents' Day murder

Fr. Benjamin Inocencio, 42, chancellor of the Vicariate of Jolo was gunned down on Holy Innocents' Day on a busy street near the back of the Jolo Cathedral, at around 10 a.m. by suspected Abu Sayyaf members.

One of the gunmen was killed by pursuing soldiers. But two civilians were killed in the crossfire. *Reports from Edwin Fernandez, Carolyn Arguillas, Jowel Canuday, Allan Nawal, Bobby Timonera, Ellen Red, Aquiles Zonio, Alden, Pantaleon, Jonathan Ma, Julie Alipala-Inot, Hernan de la Cruz, Noralyn Mustafa and Merpu Roa, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Ocampo: Bank had no part in cover-up

(From page A1)

There was no explanation, however, why the documents that Dichaves signed on Dec. 13 were antedated to Feb. 4, 2000.

Ocampo testified last Dec. 22 that she saw the President affix the signature "Jose Velarde" to several bank documents related to the P500-million trust account.

Manuel Curato, Equitable PCIBank legal counsel, corroborated her testimony on Tuesday. Curato said he was also present when the signing took place in Malacañang on Feb. 4, 2000.

Dichaves, however, wrote the Senate court last Dec. 18 to claim that he owned the P142-million check with the signature of "Jose Velarde" and the separate Equitable PCIBank account from which it was drawn.

The check, which prosecutors also planned to use as evidence against the President, allegedly funded the purchase of the so-called "Boracay mansion" that was once occupied by one of the President's mistresses.

According to prosecutors, the P500-million trust account and the P142-million check both originated from the President's P1.2-billion savings and current account with Equitable PCIBank.

Go's statement

Even if the transfer of the P500-million trust account to Dichaves were consummated, "the original documents signed by Velarde would (still) have been filed in the bank," Go said in a separate press statement.

"Contrary to news reports . . . there was nothing to cover up in the first place," said Go, a friend of the President. He resigned as Equitable PCIBank chair on Dec. 19.

But Go was also silent on why the documents had to be antedated to Feb. 4, 2000.

In his press statement, Go said that Dichaves asked him sometime in late November last year "to effect the assignment in his favor of Trust Account No. 101-78056-1 that was opened in the name of Jose Velarde."

Using the signature of Jose Velarde, the President authorized the bank to use the trust account to fund their P500-million investment management agreement.

Go said that Dichaves told him to prepare a second set of documents—the investment management agreement, the signature cards, the directional letter and the investment guidelines.

This time, however, Dichaves was to sign the documents in his name, according to Go.

"The assignment of a given account from the principal to another person is a perfectly normal bank practice and procedure, and certainly it is not illicit or illegal," Go said in his statement.

"Moreover, the original documents signed by Velarde would have been filed in the bank as part of the history of the transactions. I can never be a party to any cover-up. This I owe to the principles and commitments of Equitable PCIBank's founder."

Go confirmed that he directed Ocampo to comply with the request of Dichaves "provided that the entire procedure is in accordance with the laws and the procedures of Equitable PCIBank."

Go also confirmed that he and Dichaves were at the conference room in the office of Mendoza last Dec. 13.

"I was told that Mrs. Ocampo had brought the documents needed for the assignment. Mrs. Ocampo did not enter the conference room, but I had a glimpse of her outside the room when the documents were brought inside by one of the staffers of Attorney Mendoza," Go said.

"The documents were then signed by Mr. Dichaves and given back to Mrs. Ocampo," he added.

Go said the assignment requested by Dichaves was not implemented because he "never produced the letter-authority from the principal, Mr. Jose Velarde, as required by Equitable PCIBank."

Raul Daza

Defense lawyer Raul Daza also shrugged off news reports that there was an attempt to cover up the President's alleged secret bank accounts and transactions.

"This is clear: It is not a cover-up," Daza said in a radio interview.

He said the P500-million account was intended to be transferred to Dichaves so he could lend money to another friend of the President. He did not clarify who actually owned the account.

Acting Press Secretary Mike Toledo said the public must await the rebuttal by the defense and not jump to conclusions on whether the President was guilty of the charges.

"There are always two sides of a coin, there are always two versions of a story, what you are hearing is the version of the prosecution," he said.

Mendoza

For his part, defense lawyer Estelito Mendoza said the President had asked him to stay on as his counsel in the impeachment trial.

Mendoza told the Senate court on Tuesday that he was willing to resign as defense lawyer after Ocampo testified that documents transferring the P500-million trust account were signed by Dichaves in his office.

Mendoza insisted on Wednesday that he had no knowledge about this.

"The President called me up last night. I told him that if these accusations bothered him and would affect the effective defense of his case, I am willing to quit," he said in a radio interview.

"The President told me to stay on. Otherwise, he said, his defense would be impaired," he added.

Mendoza said he, Go and Dichaves discussed the first set of documents that Equitable PCIBank submitted to the impeachment court.

He said that after their meeting, Dichaves and Go asked him if they could use his office to discuss another matter.

Mendoza said the testimony of Ocampo and Curato would have no bearing in the impeachment case.

Various groups, however, believe that Mendoza committed impropriety and violated ethical standards of the legal profession when he allowed the signing of the documents in his office. ***With reports from Donna S. Cueto and Inquirer wires***

Defense questions Singson's credibility

(From page A1)

In spite of the guarded questions, however, Singson was, on a number of occasions, able to interject statements that conveyed the idea that the collection and deposit activities he performed were made upon the President's instructions.

At the initial stage of the cross-examination, Singson was tense and stiff. His answers to the questions were defensive and, in some instances, downright hostile. He was twice admonished, upon the request of the defense lawyer, to limit his answers to the questions asked and not to make extraneous remarks.

It was only after the cross-examination went through its second hour that Singson settled down and confidently answered the questions that were asked by Mendoza and some senator-judges.

Selective memory

Mendoza succeeded in showing before the impeachment court that Singson's recollection of important dates and events is spotty. While Singson could rattle off with ease dates, names of persons and the amounts of money he collected, he was unable to identify the "RC" to whom he allegedly gave a substantial sum of money upon instructions of the President.

Neither did Singson remember the names of the people who picked up the collections intended for the head of the Philippine National Police Roberto Lastimoso during the time the governor supervised the distribution of jueteng money to certain personalities.

Perhaps, Singson's most fatal lapse of memory was his failure to quickly give the names of the jueteng operators who remitted to him millions of pesos every month as insurance for their unhampered and police interference-free operation.

For somebody who claims he personally dealt with big time jueteng operators, this failure to remember their names is difficult to explain.

Although the instances of Singson's unexplained lapses in memory are few, expect the defense to capitalize on these errors to question his credibility and accuracy in the narration of the events that link the illegal gambling game to Malacañang.

Inconsistencies

By a skillful comparison of the testimony given by Singson at the Senate blue ribbon committee, his direct testimony at the impeachment trial and his affidavit that forms part of the Articles of Impeachment, Mendoza was able to draw out inconsistencies in some of Singson's statements.

Singson was slow to respond when his attention was called to the discrepancy in his earlier statements in regard to the handling of the jueteng money he collected; how the P130 million was delivered at the President's house in San Juan and who actually delivered money to Malacañang.

In the effort to straighten out apparent inconsistencies, Singson blamed his former lawyer for inaccuracy in the choice of words to explain the manner by which he collected jueteng money and deposited them in his personal account.

On the matter of the delivery of the P130 million, Singson had to explain at length that it was Atong Ang who handled the physical transfer of the money from the bank to the house of Ang's mother and that his declaration that President Estrada received the money was based on the latter's alleged query on why only P70 million was given to him.

And on the issue of who actually brought the money to the President, Singson backtracked from his earlier statement that he was the sole courier and admitted that at one time his clerk, Emma Lim, did the job when he was unavailable at the pre-agreed delivery time.

Singson blamed lapse of memory as the cause for his change of testimony on this significant point. He said he learned about his mistake only after he had testified before the Senate blue ribbon committee and Emma Lim called his attention to the error.

Candid

In confronting Singson with the documents that showed he withdrew money from provincial funds (which came from the share of Ilocos Sur in the excise tax) to fund the fictitious purchase of tobacco post-harvest facilities, the defense wanted to show that he was a person of questionable moral character or integrity.

He attested to the receipt of machines and completion of a tobacco-curing project that did not exist. He willingly cooperated with Ang in the diversion of public funds to private bank accounts and prepared the paperwork to cover up the misuse of the people's money.

The bottom line of the defense's line of questioning action is: Singson does not have the credibility or moral rectitude to make his accusations against the President worthy of belief by the public.

As the defense telegraphed its move against Singson during the opening statements of the impeachment trial, the prosecution's star witness was ready with his answer when the falsification acts were taken up during his cross-examination.

He candidly admitted his offenses and claimed that he committed the crimes mentioned because he wanted to secure for his constituents livelihood projects that only the President can make available.

It is up to the senator-judges to determine whether the reason cited by Singson to justify his commission of the acts of falsification is worthy of consideration or should be dismissed as the belated excuse of a cornered person.

By and large, the cross-examination of Singson did not do substantial damage to his direct testimony. Except for the instances of inconsistency earlier cited and his inability to recall certain facts, Singson was able to maintain the integrity of his direct testimony.

* * *

Erratum

THROUGH an inadvertence, the headline of Raul Palabrica's analysis of the impeachment trial in yesterday's issue of the INQUIRER came out as "Mendoza, Dichaves may have to testify."

The head should have been: "Erap lawyer, Dichaves may have to testify."

The lawyer referred to was Fernando Chua, the President's personal attorney. We regret the error.—Ed.

Estrada hid ₱2B in banks, says Joker

(From page A1)

the name of Kelvin Garcia, according to Prosecutor-Rep. Oscar Moreno.

Arroyo said Mr. Estrada hid the P2 billion in the Equitable PCIBank, a senior official of which testified earlier at the trial that she saw the President sign Jose Velarde on a P500-million trust account while in Malacañang on Feb. 4, 2000.

Arroyo said that aside from the trust account, there were checking and savings accounts, which the prosecution would detail later.

A prosecutor, who asked not to be named, said the Velarde account was the "mother account." He likened it to a "funnel (*embudo*)" where hidden funds were forwarded.

The source said prosecutors were working on information that the President was maintaining other accounts in other banks.

"There are many accounts . . . in almost all the banks," the source said.

Prosecutors have been trying to link the Equitable PCI Bank accounts to allegations that the President received huge bribes from "jueteng" lords and skimmed off millions of pesos in tobacco taxes.

These were used to fund a lavish lifestyle for himself and numerous mistresses, according to the prosecutors.

The prosecution has claimed that the money kept by the President in Equitable was ill-gotten as he declared a net worth of only P35 million in his 1999 Statement of Assets and Liabilities (SAL).

Philippine graft laws require that public officials declare all their assets and liabilities.

On Tuesday, Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. insisted that the prosecutors must first lay sufficient basis to presume that the President had ill-gotten wealth.

But House prosecutors are confident that the burden of evidence will eventually "shift to the defense."

Marinduque Rep. Edmund Reyes, a spokesperson for the prosecution panel, said the prosecutors would "satisfy Davide's requirements" by formally presenting copies of Mr. Estrada's declared incomes.

3 statements

In a press briefing yesterday, Reyes said the prosecution panel would present the President's "last three statements of assets and liabilities" from his assumption of the presidency in June 1998 up to end of 1999 to show that the bank deposits were ill-gotten.

He said the President must tell the impeachment court how he earned P500 million in the first 35 days of 2000.

Reyes said the President's SALs showed that he only had "cash on hand and in bank" worth P1.9 million as of June 31, 1998; P5 million as of Dec. 31, 1998; and P6.5 million as of Dec. 31, 1999.

The SALs also showed that the President's net worth stood at P32.7 million as of June 30, 1998; P33.4 million as of Dec. 31, 1998; and P35.8 million as of Dec. 31, 1999.

The three SALs, copies of which were distributed to House reporters, had been pre-marked as prosecution evidence only the other day, Reyes said.

"Note that he only had P6.5 million 'cash on hand and in bank' as of Dec. 31, 1999. Then on Feb. 4, 2000 he transferred the amount of P500 million to a trust account (with Equitable). So he had 35 days to earn that much money," the prosecution's spokesperson said.

Reyes noted that prosecution witness Clarissa Ocampo, senior vice president of Equitable PCI Bank, had testified that the Velarde account already existed in 1999.

Salary

The President's salary is P50,000 a month or P600,000 a year, according to Reyes. "But to earn P500 million in 35 days means that every day he earned more than P14.2 million or approximately P600,000 per hour."

Davide, the trial's presiding officer, had maintained that "at this point in the trial" the prosecution has yet to "strengthen the foundation for the basis of the legal presumption" that the P500-million Velarde trust account contained ill-gotten wealth.

Reyes said the prosecution took Davide's ruling to mean that "the burden of evidence shifts to the defense after we have established that during his incumbency as President, he acquired wealth manifestly out of proportion to his salary, other lawful incomes, and earnings from legitimately acquired property."

"The nature of his salary and other legitimate income will still not be enough for him to earn P500 million within that short span of time," he said.

"He had long left show business, so all his income must come from politics," Reyes said. Mr. Estrada is a former movie actor.

Apart from the SALs, the prosecution will also present the President's income tax returns and other witnesses privy to the release of the President's monthly salary.

The SALs, income tax returns, and the testimony of witnesses "would be enough to put the burden on the President," Reyes said. ***Reports from AFP, Martin P. Marfil and Volt Contreras***

Chavit grilled for 5½ hours

(From page A1)

confuse him with his questions.

"I just want to make it clear because you are trying to confuse me," Singson said in Tagalog.

Persistent, Mendoza noted that Singson tended to answer more than what he was being asked.

"The witness has the habit of adding the name of the President," Mendoza said.

On Mendoza's request, Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., the presiding officer, reminded Singson to make categorical answers to specific questions.

In accordance with a previous agreement, Singson was recalled to the witness stand to be cross-examined by the defense panel in connection with his direct testimony on two Articles of Impeachment—bribery and graft and corruption.

Singson said he personally delivered a total of P190.3 million in cold cash to the President every 15 days from November 1998 to August 2000.

He said the money was apart from the P200 million deposited in a bank, which alleged jueteng auditor Yolanda Ricaforte later handed over to Edward Serapio, the President's lawyer and secretary of the Erap Muslim Youth Foundation [illegible]

Singson explained that when he took over from Charlie "Atong" Ang the collection of jueteng protection money for the President, he delivered P5 million, mostly in cash, to the President in Malacañang every 15 days.

The rest of the collections, Singson said, he initially deposited in his personal account with Metrobank.

He said that when the President sent Ricaforte as his auditor, he gave all the collections to Ricaforte who kept them in several Equitable PCIBank accounts.

Singson, however, admitted being wrong when he testified before the Senate blue ribbon committee on Oct. 11 last year that it was he who delivered the P5 million handed to the President's secretary Malou Florendo.

Singson said that after he made the statement, his accountant Emma Lim reminded him that it was she who went to Malacañang that day because he was in Vigan at that time.

"I was wrong and she reminded me of that," Singson said.

"That is an important matter. Do you think you had other mistakes in your declarations?" Mendoza asked.

Singson retorted he wouldn't know.

Mendoza asked why there was no jueteng payola for the Philippine National Police chief listed in Singson's ledger when Panfilo Lacson assumed the post.

Singson confirmed that the entries "Goma" and "new Goma" were meant for then PNP chiefs Roberto Lastimoso and Edmundo Larroza who, he said, refused to get the payola. He said there were people who claimed the payola for them.

Mendoza noted that from December 1999 to August 2000, there was no payola for the PNP chief.

Singson explained that Lacson wanted the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) to operate Pick 2 and later the small-town lottery to replace jueteng.

Meeting with operators

He said that in a meeting of jueteng operators with police generals and Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora at the PCSO, it was agreed that the PNP would get 2.5 to 3 percent of the earnings from the new numbers game.

Singson said Lacson wanted to personally hand out the commissions to the provincial and regional police directors.

"He did not want the loyalty of the regional and provincial commanders to go to the (jueteng) operators," Singson said.

The governor was also asked about the P130 million in tobacco tax kickbacks that was allegedly delivered to the President in his residence on Polk Street in Greenhills, San Juan on Aug. 31, 1998.

Singson admitted that he did not actually see the money being delivered to the President's house.

Singson said it was Ang who told him that the money was handed to the President.

According to Singson, he and Ang went to a bank where he had to wait for some time as they had the checks changed into cash before bringing it to Polk Street. The governor said Ang carried the money inside the President's house.

Mendoza concluded that if Ang had not told him the truth, then nothing was brought to Polk Street. Singson replied that he knew that it was cash as they waited a long time in the bank to have the check encashed.

No damage

After the cross-examination, lawyers of Singson declared that the defense panel hardly made a dent on the testimony of the prosecution star witness.

"No hits, no runs. No damage done," Pablito Sanidad, the private prosecutor who guided Singson when he was grilled by Mendoza.

"Singson's testimony was left intact even after cross-examination," Sanidad said.

Simeon Marcelo, who had conducted the direct examination on Singson, said that "for lawyers, if we do not ask for a re-direct, this would mean that the defense was not able to get any points from the cross-examination."

Marcelo said the cross-examination only reiterated "the so many details that Singson knows about how jueteng and kickback money made its way to President Estrada."

"His demeanor really showed how truthful he was," Marcelo said.

In the brief press conference after the cross-examination, Singson said "guilty *si Pangulo. Maliwanag pa sa buwan* (The President is guilty. And it is brighter than the moon)."

But Mendoza claimed a major triumph. He said the cross-examination showed that Singson only fabricated the ledger that contained the lists of jueteng collections, which were eventually turned over to the President.

"As expected, the ledger is nothing. (Singson) only fabricated it," the defense lawyer said.

Mendoza said that if there were anything unearthed during the cross-examination, "these were the many crimes that Singson committed."

Immunity from suit

The prosecution team yesterday asked the impeachment court to grant three of its witnesses, including Singson, immunity from suits in connection with their testimony linking President to the jueteng protection racket.

The other witnesses included in the manifestations were Emma Lim and Ma. Carmencita Itchon, both of whom were employees of Singson, who corroborated the governor's testimony that jueteng money was handed to the President on several occasions.

In two manifestations filed by the prosecution team, the prosecutors said that the testimony of the three were "necessary for the conviction of President Estrada . . . and for his subsequent criminal prosecution."

They also said that the three had not been convicted of any crime involving moral turpitude.

They cited Section 1 of Presidential Decree 749 that states that any person who voluntarily gives information against public officials involved in abuse or dishonesty "shall be exempt from prosecution or punishment for the offense with reference to his information and testimony were given."

Erap sees . . .

(From page A1)

Ocampo, Equitable PCIBank senior vice president, and Manuel Curato, the bank's lawyer.

He said that the conspiracy against him was well-orchestrated, especially now that MBC chair Ricardo Romulo is also the chair of Equitable PCIBank.

The President also pointed out that the private prosecutors in the impeachment case belonged to the Romulo, Mabanta law office, which is the law firm of the MBC chair.

"You can see the orchestrated effort of these people to really put me down. It is very obvious that these people are conspiring against me," he said during an ambush interview in Guadalupe yesterday.

Mr. Estrada had emerged from hibernation, breaking a three-day streak of "President's time," to condole with the families of SPO4 Roberto Gutierrez and Insp. Nestor Salvador. They died while trying to detonate a bomb in Makati Saturday.

He said those involved in the conspiracy were doing all they could to bring him down and grab the seat of power from him.

"They are scaring, pressuring my lawyers. They are pressuring my Cabinet members. The witnesses, they are also pressuring them," he said.

The President said his political opponents, including congressmen, were visiting some of the witnesses. Some people, he added, were being persuaded to testify against him.

He said that they were even trying to pressure his lawyers, Estelito Mendoza and Andres Narvasa, to withdraw from the case.

"They are trying everything," the President said in Filipino.

Still, he was confident that he would win in the end because more people were praying for him.

The President said he was still prepared to testify personally before the impeachment court if his lawyers would advise him to do so.

"I am ready. I will only tell the truth so I will not really be having any difficulty," he said in Filipino.

Lawyers say no

But his lawyers are saying that their client cannot be compelled to testify and "be a witness against himself."

This was the position maintained by Mr. Estrada's lawyers yesterday as it objected to a request filed by the House prosecution that would have compelled the President to testify in the ongoing impeachment trial against him.

The prosecution panel had submitted a request for admission last Dec. 20 before the impeachment court, asking that President Estrada answer specific questions even without appearing personally before the court.

The panel asked that Mr. Estrada be made to answer 36 questions and related queries, mostly asking him to confirm whether he knew certain individuals being linked to him in the impeachment proceedings.

But in a nine-page objection to request for admission, the defense panel argued that Mr. Estrada "cannot be compelled to be a witness against himself, a right afforded even to the lowliest citizen under the Bill of Rights of the 1987 Constitution."

Prosecution panel spokesperson Rep. Edmund Reyes rapped Mr. Estrada for "betraying the public anew for not fulfilling his promise that he would answer charges against him personally before the impeachment body."

Lying

"He lied again. He made promises that he would be the one who would personally deny the charges against him but now he is hiding behind his lawyers," Reyes said.

House prosecutor Joker Arroyo chided the President for "cowering in fear even before the war has even started."

"He's holed up and dug in for the worst," Arroyo said.

Arroyo added that Mr. Estrada was not even being asked to appear before the court but only to "write down his answers while assisted by his lawyers."

"We've already given him an edge. Yet he really doesn't want to contribute his part in the search for truth in this impeachment," he said.

[illegible] the defense said "the President [illegible] obliged to testify as witness for the prosecution in the very impeachment case in which he is accused of several crimes."

"(Mr. Estrada) cannot be compelled to testify in the guise of a request for admissions," the defense averred.

The President's lawyers also defended Mr. Estrada's decision not to testify during the trial as rooted in Rule 115 of the Rules of Court which provides that "his silence shall not in any manner prejudice him."

The defense also said "all of the questions propounded in the request for admission tend to incriminate the accused in the present proceedings."

"Compelling (Mr. Estrada) to answer would violate due process and his privilege against self-incrimination," the defense said.

Lacson: We will get those bastards

(From page A1)

"This is a terrorist group trained by foreign terrorist groups, so they are used to activities of this kind," Lacson said without elaborating.

President Estrada yesterday confirmed that investigators had identified the culprits, saying: "We do have evidence . . . There are not only groups but personalities. Once we start arresting them, you will know who they are."

In an another interview broadcast on dzMM radio, Lacson said that the attackers used improvised one-kilogram black powder bombs with timing devices.

He said the type of explosive was not usually used by the military. He said the bombs were "not very sophisticated" but were "really intended to kill."

Lacson also said that prior to the Rizal Day bombings, police received intelligence reports with "general descriptions of places that could possibly be bombed and they were many. Unfortunately, we could not cover all these places."

Now P2-million reward

Interior Secretary Alfredo Lim yesterday offered P2 million, doubling an earlier P1-million reward, for any information leading to the capture of the mastermind of the Dec. 30 bombings. He has also pledged protection and immunity from criminal prosecution to bombers' accomplices should they decide to surrender and testify against their leader(s).

He suggested that those who are afraid to report directly to the police might relay their information through parish priests.

This came as the death toll from the blasts in five public places in the metropolis rose to 18. Two more of those wounded by an explosion on a Light Rail Transit train died from their injuries.

Ladislao Yuchongco, director of the Health Emergency Management Staff, said the number of injured by the blasts stood at 97. He said it was not certain whether three of those would survive.

Seven weeks pregnant

The two new fatalities were identified as Remedios Malaque, 24, of Bacoor, Cavite, and Edmund Domondon, a resident of Mandaluyong City. Malaque died at 8:20 p.m. Tuesday while Domondon breathed his last at 9:35 a.m. yesterday.

Both died at the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center, where more than 50 victims were rushed following the bombing of the commuter train.

Malaque, who was reportedly seven weeks pregnant, suffered "inhalational" injury from the fumes of the blast, according to hospital staff. Burns covered 40 percent of her body, staff members said.

Domondon, whose mangled left leg had been amputated, went into cardiac arrest, nurses said.

All surgical and medical costs are being shouldered by the JRMMC.

All in all 15 people have died from the LRT blast alone.

Romeo Devera of Tondo, Manila, died on Dec. 31. An unidentified woman passed away the day before.

Other fatalities have been identified as Jonelyn Abalos of San Andres Bukid, Manila; Eunice Canete-Chua and Rowena Chua, both of Tacloban City; Gerardo Lim of Meycauayan, Bulacan; Roweno Corpin of Dasmariñas, Cavite; Crizele An Acusin of Malabon; Valentino Calaquian of Tondo and Lynette Rodriguez-Narvaez of Paco, Manila.

The others remain unidentified.

Aside from the 15 killed by the LRT blast, two policemen who were defusing a bomb in Makati died in an ensuing explosion. A bomb attack on a bus in Cubao claimed another life.

Priest, priestess

Members of the militant group Akbayan held an ecumenical service at the LRT's Blumentritt Station, where the deadly bomb went off Saturday.

Over 40 blast patients are still being treated at the JRMMC, the Chinese General Hospital and the Tondo Medical Center.

Around 30 Akbayan members gathered on the steps of the station in Sta. Cruz around 1 p.m. and offered two floral wreaths with sashes marked "*Katarungan sa mga pinaslang; parusahan ang may kasalanan.*"

A Jesuit from the Ateneo de Manila University presided over offered prayers, and later, a "babaylan" or priestess performed a prayer and dance ritual to soothe the spirits of the dead.

Although the operations of the LRT have resumed, several vestiges of the senseless blast remain. The station's signs still bear holes, while the glass panels of the teller's booths have been replaced with plastic sheets.

Crossfire

A lack of clear suspects and government warnings of more attacks have unleashed a crossfire of accusations targeting the government, political opposition, the military, right wing factions and Moro and communist guerrillas, among others.

National Security Adviser Alexander Aguirre said "we are looking at all possibilities," including the prospect of the involvement of Moro extremists or communist insurgents.

Aguirre said it was also being determined whether the blasts were linked to President Estrada's corruption trial in the Senate.

On Tuesday, the Abu Sayyaf, originally fingered by police for the bombings, denied responsibility. The group has previously claimed responsibility for bombings in Mindanao.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Communist Party of the Philippines have also denied masterminding the precision-timed attacks.

"Ours is a guerrilla organization fighting for a legitimate cause and not a terrorist organization," MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said yesterday.

He said the MILF expected the military and the police would blame the Moro insurgents for the bombings "as usual."

'Looking too far'

But he said police investigators in Metro Manila were "looking too far" for suspects, adding that his group suspects that the bombings were the work of "people close to President Estrada."

"Some of them could be in the military and the police and are occupying high positions. The motive is very clear. If the President is impeached, they will lose whatever perks they have now," Kabalu said.

Several people were earlier detained for questioning but Lacson said they had all been released.

Militant group Sanlakas yesterday branded as "preposterous" a suggestion from presidential spokesperson Ernesto Maceda that those calling for the resignation of elected officials were probably involved in the bombings.

Political party PDP-Laban urged the PNP to produce "quick and credible results."

Camp Crame sources have said that the bombs that exploded last Saturday appear to have a "signature" similar to that of last May explosion in two malls in the cities of Mandaluyong and Makati. ***With reports from Volt Contreras, Armand Nocum, Gerald Lacuarta; Allan A. Nawal and Jowel F. Canuday, PDI Mindanao Bureau; AP, AFP***

General's . . .

(From page A1)

Emil Michael Vincent Ventura, a fifth-grade pupil and the son of Police Director Diony Ventura, was held for questioning by Makati and Southern Police District officers for more than 12 hours last Dec. 30.

The senior Ventura said that while his son was undergoing interrogation at the SPD headquarters, Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Jejomar Binay arrived. Binay allegedly gave the boy P2,000 to make him admit to complicity in the bombing.

The younger Ventura was apprehended by a security guard of the Dusit Hotel right after the bomb, which was found near the Edsa side of the hotel, went off while being defused by bomb experts from the Makati police.

The boy was not even allowed to call his parents, Ventura told a press conference yesterday.

"My son was not physically harmed but he was traumatized from the harassment," Ventura said.

Ventura, who is currently on "floating" status prior to his retirement next month, was chief of the Philippine National Police human resource and doctrine training directorate. He was an administrative officer when Ramos was chief of the then Philippine Constabulary in 1984.

Because of his son's interrogation and his links with Ramos, news reports said Ventura was accused by outgoing Ambassador to the United States Ernesto Maceda, who is the personal spokesperson of President Estrada, of possible involvement in the spate of bombings in Metro Manila last Dec. 30.

Yesterday, Ventura denied Maceda's allegations. Although Maceda had said that there was no actual evidence linking him to the bombings, Ventura said that "the mere fact that he issued a statement damaged my reputation."

The Dusit Hotel security people seized Emil after the boy approached one of the hotel guards to ask about the whereabouts of his brother-in-law, a certain Jonji, whom he was supposed to meet near the hotel.

Emil and Jonji had agreed to meet at 10:30 a.m. but the young boy was late.

When he did not see his brother-in-law, Emil whiled the time away by playing with his racing car at the Ayala Center. Then he went back to the hotel to once more look for Jonji.

While he was there, the bomb that was being defused by the bomb experts at a deserted gasoline station beside the hotel went off.

Emil asked the guard what the explosion was and if he had seen anybody, referring to his brother-in-law, waiting for him.

He was taken into custody by the guard and brought to the hotel security room for interrogation. He was then turned over to the Makati police who took him to a police outpost in the Glorietta mall. He was then taken to the Makati police station.

Much later that afternoon, Emil was taken to the Southern Police District headquarters in Fort Bonifacio. (The Makati police is under the SPD.)

All this while, the Venturas had thought the boy was with Jonji. Only later did they find out, after checking with Jonji, that the boy was not with him.

After a frantic search, Ventura said they finally located Emil at the SPD headquarters at 4 a.m. of Dec. 31. He was still being interrogated at the time by Supt. Gaudencio Cordora of the SPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Ventura said Emil showed his interrogators his identification card and his father's calling card to no avail. He was not allowed to make a single phone call.

Ventura said the family is contemplating filing charges against the Makati and SPD policemen, the security guards of the Dusit Hotel, and Binay for what they did to his son. He said they violated his son's rights in their eagerness to produce a suspect in the bombing.

"I think they should be taught a lesson," Ventura said.

Crizele was 'the joy of the entire Acusin clan'

(From page A1)

drenched body away from the blast site in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

Crizele's casket was kept closed for most of the wake to spare her family and friends any greater anguish. The powerful explosion had destroyed her face, making it impossible to recognize her.

"Witnesses say her left leg was not (severed) by the explosion but by the stampede. People stepped on it. Poor Crizele," Nida said.

Grief lay heavy on the Acusin household, as family members remembered how the child lighted up their home.

"She would often jump on our back and give us a nice kiss. She loved us so much. And we love her, too," Nida said.

"She was a very sweet girl. She was sweet to all her relatives. Everyone was happy when she was around," Michael Padilla, 28, said of his niece, a first grader at the Sta. Rosa de Lima School.

"She wanted to be a doctor so she could cure her ailing relatives. She would always tell us that," he said.

Crizele was born in the Tondo district and grew up in Metroville, Sta. Rosa, Laguna, with maternal relatives. Her parents live in Barangay Longos, Malabon. They only get to visit their daughter on weekends since the father, PO3 Jaime Acusin, works in a mobile patrol unit at the Western Police District, and his wife runs a fish stall at a public market in Malabon.

High into the air

For the first time, Crizele was going to welcome the New Year in the Malabon residence of her parents, since the Acusin family usually spent the holidays in Sta. Rosa, Michael said.

On that black Saturday, the little girl, her closest uncle, Sixto Dizon Jr., 34, and her brother Laurence, 11, boarded Coach No 1037 at the LRT Buendia Station.

Several minutes later, past noon, the train approached the Blumentritt Station.

The bomb was hidden right beneath Crizele, who was seated near one of doors of the front coach.

The blast blew Laurence out of the coach, but he survived with only bruises.

Sixto lost his right leg.

The explosion lifted Crizele and her blue dress high into the air, and her soul never came down.

Two fathers

Jaime, her father, rushed to the scene when news of the bomb attack reached WPD headquarters. He arrived to find that he had lost his only daughter.

Later, lying in his hospital bed, a second father to Crizele could not stop weeping. "I no longer have a baby," Sixto told Nida.

The uncle, a civil engineer, had taken care of the child for most of her young life and loved her as his own, Nida said.

"He dressed her up. He prepared her food. He tutored her. He loved her a lot," she added.

Wake for policeman

President Estrada yesterday emerged from three days of "President's time" to visit the wake of SPO4 Roberto Gutierrez, who was instantly killed while trying to defuse a bomb in Makati City.

Mr. Estrada personally offered his condolences to Gutierrez's relatives and gave the family P100,000 from the President's Social Fund.

He also gave another P100,000 to the family of Gutierrez's boss, Insp. Nestor Salvador, who died later Saturday while undergoing surgery.

The President promised to provide scholarships for the children of the two policemen.

"If they don't have their own houses yet, we will help them," he said in Filipino.

Philippine National Police chief Director General Panfilo Lacson said that Salvador's family would get P520,000, while Gutierrez's family would get P537,000 in insurance alone, apart from other financial assistance.

P50,000 each

He said the two families would also be given P50,000 each to help with funeral expenses.

The President's visit to the wake at the Loyola Memorial Chapel came as a surprise to Palace reporters since there was no official schedule for Mr. Estrada yesterday.

Wednesday was the fourth day straight that Mr. Estrada's itinerary read "President's time," meaning that no event had been scheduled for media coverage.

Palace officials said the President had chosen to attend to pressing matters in private. ***With a report from Donna Cueto***

Images of blast victims raising donations, anger

(From page A1)

woman succumbed to her wounds in hospital. More than 100 were wounded.

Images of Emmanuel and many other amputees and burn victims are rallying ordinary Filipinos who, amid warnings of new violence, are pitching in to ease the suffering of some of the victims.

Doctors say scores of private citizens have offered cash, toys, food and other gifts. Many have even offered to adopt Emmanuel, said John Lim, the boy's surgeon.

Alaine Pascua, of the People's Movement Against Poverty, said his organization has received many offers to help the victims. Most of them ask about Emmanuel.

"Essentially, he's sparking a drive for funding," said Pascua. The group plans to launch on Friday a citywide collection, asking the mostly poor residents to donate one peso each for the victims.

The government pledged to pay all medical expenses for the victims and give them P12,000 each, a notable sum in a country with a minimum wage of P225 a day.

The horrific images are also fueling a nationwide crossfire of anger and blame hitting virtually every group with money, political power or weapons.

Nobody has claimed the attacks, which came as the nation celebrated a New Year's holiday already dampened by the tension of President Estrada's impeachment trial on corruption charges.

Opposition groups accuse Mr. Estrada's allies of planning the attacks as a pretext to declare martial law and halt his impeachment trial. The government has fingered opposition politicians or communist rebels clamoring for Mr. Estrada's downfall. Others point to numerous disgruntled factions among the police and military.

Mr. Estrada, a former action film star, is under intensifying fire at his impeachment trial, accused of moving hundreds of millions of pesos in accounts under a false name.

Emmanuel, who doctors say may be three years old, lost his leg in the bomb that killed at least 13 and injured more than 60 on a downtown commuter train, said his pediatrician.

He recovered consciousness Tuesday and feebly spoke in a central Philippine dialect.

"The first thing he did was to ask for his leg back," said Dr. Dan Lim. Lim said he has repeated the request regularly and says little else.

Lim said he fears the parents may be among the tersely worded entries on Saturday's admissions list. The list reads in part:

"Girl X—Dead on Scene. Unidentified Woman—Dead on Arrival."

Further down on the list reads: "Paulino Umalla, 36,—Operating Room."

Umalla, an impoverished rice farmer from the North, said he took his wife and three preschool children to Manila to welcome the new year with his brother-in-law.

"I was just yelling for help because my leg was so bad," Umalla said, comforting his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter as his family sprawled on bare mattresses at the hospital's Charity Ward—the room for the poorest patients.

Every two seconds as the weary, weather-beaten peasant spoke Wednesday, a standup fan blew flies off the burns, cuts and scrapes that peppered the faces, hands and legs of the entire family.

He shakes his head as he describes how he panicked and stopped thinking as his wife pulled their children from the wreckage.

"The explosion was so hard that it almost made me forget the children."*AP*

Pro-Erap tabloid slams Chavit, Gloria

(From page A1)

ang Kaluluwa" (Singson, wretched soul).

Its eight pages had five stories that tried to portray Singson as a scoundrel. One article was critical of Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and was headlined "*GMA-Gahamang Maupo Agad*" (greedy for power).

It was not clear who published the paper, but one of its writers, a consultant at the Office of the Press Secretary, was quick to deny that Malacañang was behind its publication.

Diego Cagahastian, who wrote the story "Chavit Singson's life story of lies and demonic schemes," said he was merely invited by the officials of the paper to write a "guest article" about Singson.

Cagahastian said he was standing by his story. But he stressed that technically speaking, he was not connected with Malacañang at present because his six-month contract as consultant ended last Dec. 31.

This contract could be renewed by acting Press Secretary Michael Toledo.

No Palace hand

"Malacañang is not involved in it. Officially, my work with the (Office of the Press Secretary) has lapsed," the 45-year-old Cagahastian told the INQUIRER.

"I'm not with government, strictly speaking," he said. "This is proof that the Palace is not part of any move to discredit Singson."

But Singson's lawyer, Simeon Marcelo, said the timing of the tabloid's publication was clearly intended to coincide with the governor's cross-examination at the impeachment trial.

"They know that the cross-examination would be useless, that they won't get anything from it . . . Now they have resorted to dirty tricks by publishing all these libelous materials about Chavit Singson. It's a sign of desperation," Marcelo said.

Asked if Malacañang was behind the tabloid, Marcelo replied: "It's like the (Dec. 30) bombings, what we need to ask is 'who will benefit from it?' The number one question is who has the motive and who will benefit."

Pinoy Times lookalike

The tabloid's staff box named a certain Oscar Santiago as its editor and chair of the board. But unlike legitimate newspapers, it had no corporation name, business address and telephone number.

Cagahastian refused to give any background on Santiago. He, however, described the tabloid as a "legitimate tabloid which is a direct competitor of the Pinoy Times."

Pinoy Exposé looks so similar to the opposition tabloid Pinoy Times that one reporter bought a copy for P6 from a newsboy selling it on Ayala Avenue in Makati.

"I thought it was the Pinoy Times, a special edition. So I bought it," said Robert Rivero of Radio Mindanao Network.

In his article, Cagahastian depicted Singson as a "wily and scheming" traditional politician who would use all tricks to gain political advantage over his opponents. The article also mentioned that Singson had a relationship with former Congresswoman Lorna Verano-Yap.

"I am proud to have called Singson a liar in my story. I am standing by my story," Cagahastian told the INQUIRER.

He said he allowed the paper to use his byline because it was written from a "first person account and I don't see anything libelous about it."

Cagahastian, who used to work for the Manila Bulletin, worked at the office of Press Undersecretary Noel Cabrera from July to December 2000. His job included writing and editing press releases.

Assistant Secretary for Media Affairs Carmen Suva said Cagahastian was classified as a "special assistant" to Cabrera.

Juicy tidbits

Cagahastian said he was competent to write about Singson's life because he interviewed the governor lengthily in Hong Kong eight years ago as background for his screenplay for the movie "The Luis 'Chavit' Singson Story."

He said actor Fernando Poe Jr., a common friend of Mr. Estrada and Singson, was supposed to star in the movie but the project did not push through after Singson backed out from financing the film.

Cagahastian said it was during this interview that he came to know of juicy tidbits about Singson's life, including his alleged romantic relations with Verano-Yap.

"He had many other lovers. This is something that Singson is making no secret of," Cagahastian said.

Cagahastian worked as a personal secretary of then San Juan Mayor Joseph Estrada in 1972. From there, he worked as movie scriptwriter and director. He has been writing the President's screenplays since 1975.

He boasted of having "discovered" actress Laarni Enriquez, who is now one of the President's mistresses. He said he introduced Enriquez to the President.

Other stories in Pinoy Exposé also tried to present Singson as a rascal.

One story, "*Chavit: Diyos ng jueteng*" (Chavit, God of jueteng) and written by a certain Willy Arienda, told about how Singson allegedly took over the gambling operations in his province.

Another story, "*Si Chavit, Kahit sa Madyong Madaya*" was about how Singson cheats in mahjong while yet another, "Madugo ang mga Bakas sa Buhay ni Luis Chavit Singson," (The bloody trail of Singson's life) alleged that the governor masterminded at least 11 killings.

The story "*Matakaw sa Laman, Takot sa Pananagutan*" (Lustful, but shirks from responsibility) was about his alleged relationship with starlet Monica Herrera.

The story about Macapagal depicted the Vice President as a power-hungry politician who initially posed as a nationalist economist and took a stance against the import liberalization law. But the writer of the article said Macapagal made a turnaround when she became a senator and drafted the foreign investment law that was supposedly more harsh than the import liberalization law.

Pinoy Exposé promised to reveal more about supposed secrets of the Vice President, Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin and more on Singson in its next issue. The tabloid is supposed to come out every Wednesday.

PDI statement on Pinoy Exposé

ISAGANI Yambot, publisher of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, yesterday issued the following statement:

"The tabloid Pinoy Exposé that was illegally inserted in some copies of the Philippine Daily Inquirer yesterday is not a part of the INQUIRER. It is not a supplement of the INQUIRER. It has no relation whatsoever to Pinoy Times, a reputable paper published by Eugenia D. Apostol, founding chair and former publisher of the INQUIRER.

"Pinoy Exposé is apparently a cheap propaganda sheet of the administration that is a shoddy imitation of the legitimate paper, Pinoy Times. Its insertion in the INQUIRER is unauthorized."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, January 4, 2001
Week Before Epiphany

1st Reading:	**1 Jn 3:7-10**
Gospel:	**Jn 1:35-42**

John was at Bethany across the Jordan with two of his disciples. As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and said, "There is the Lamb of God." On hearing this, the two disciples followed Jesus. He turned and saw them following, and he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They answered, "Rabbi (which means *Master*), where are you staying?" Jesus said, "Come and see." So they went and saw where he stayed and spent the rest of that day with him. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard what John had said and followed Jesus. Early the next morning he found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means *the Christ),* and he brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John, but you shall be called Cephas" (which means *Rock).*

January 4 Thursday –commentary

We never know what beautiful consequences follow from our witnessing to Jesus. But often we set up a chain of events with great consequences for society and for the world. In today's Gospel, John the Baptist led the way to Jesus again, and this time, two of his disciples followed Jesus. They stayed with Jesus and were drawn to him. I was attracted to the priesthood through the good example of priests I came to know. I have known other people who have been doing good to others because they experienced goodness from others. Do deeds that remind others of Christ. You will be surprised in heaven to learn what beautiful chain of evens have happened because of your witnessing.

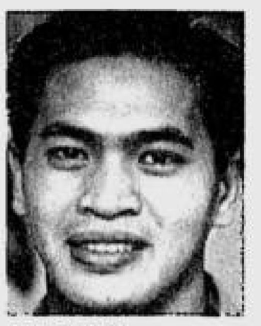
Claretian Publications Inc., 8 Mayumi St., U.P. Village, Diliman, Quezon City, U.P. P.O. Box 4, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City; Tel.: 921-3984; Fax: 921-7429; E-mail: claret@cnl.net; Website: http://www.cnl.net/claret

32 MBA players joining draft; Adducul excluded

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ROMEL Adducul didn't make it, but 32 other players from the Metropolitan Basketball Association expressed their intention to make the big leap to the PBA yesterday after beating the noon deadline for the annual draft application.

Adducul, the MBA's most dominant player, didn't make the deadline, although there are several PBA teams still waiting for him to join the league, including Mobiline and Shell Velocity.


ADDUCUL

The MBA players, who filed their application for the draft during the year's first day of office, made the number of aspirants to a record 65. The annual drafting will be held on Jan. 14 at Glorietta Mall in Makati City.

MBA crowd drawers Ato Morano, Gilbert Demape, Dave Bautista, Francis Adriano, Norman Gonzales and Jomar Tierra led the aspirants from the MBA who sent their application just before the noon deadline yesterday.

Flashy guards Kenny Evans of Cebu Gems and Willie Miller of Nueva Ecija Patriots have earlier applied for the draft.

Fil-American John Hartley Arigo was among the aspirants who showed promise with his impressive credentials playing for the University of Tampa and Sunshine State.

The 6-foot-5 shooter is likened to NBA star Reggie Miller because of his killer shooting that made him the leading scorer for Sunshine State with an average of 16.4 points per game.

Easily the prized catch among the MBA stalwarts are Demape of the Manila Metrostars and Morano of the Pampanga Dragons.

At 6-foot-1, Demape has the quickness and shooting touch that could rival former MBA guards Gherome Ejercito and Dale Singson who are now the starters for Mobiline and Shell, respectively.

The 6-foot Morano, 27, has a wide offensive range as an off-guard and is in the mold as Ato Agustin.

Bautista is a 6-foot-4 power-player who saw action with the Dragons and Welcoat Paints in the PBL, while Adriano is a talented swingman for the Pasig-Rizal Pirates.

Gonzales was the main man of the Cagayan de Oro Amigos, while Tierra played as the staring guard for the Davao Eagles.

Other MBA players who applied were Jovito Sese, Ryan Bernardo, Victor Oliver Agapito, Michael Garcia, Jonathan de Guzman, Rolando Basilides, Leode Garcia, Dominic Uy, Woodrow Enriquez and Jercules Tangkay.

Also in the list were Michael Almonte, Marlon Piodo, Mike Manigo, June Longalong, Jonathan Serrano, Fernan Dino Manuel, Rafael Santos, Paul Guerrero, Maoi Roca, Joseph Salangsang and Jay Magat.

Fil-Ams will have until Jan. 9 to secure their Department of Justice confirmation that would clear them to play for the PBA.

Ateneo eyes last s'finals berth in PBL

STANDINGS	W	L
Shark	8	2
Welcoat	7	3
Blu Sun Power	6	4
Montaña Jewels	6	4
Hapee	5	5
Ateneo-Pioneer	4	5
Ana Freezer	4	6
Osaka Iridology	2	7
PharmaQuick	2	8

GAMES TODAY (Makati Coliseum)
3:30 p.m.—PYBL games
5:30 p.m.—Osaka vs Ateneo-Pioneer

By Dennis Eroa

ATENEO-PIONEER tries to complete the semifinal slate when it battles Osaka Iridology today in the resumption of the PBL Challenge Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

A victory will give the Blue Eagles their fifth win in 10 outings, good enough for their first-ever semifinal appearance in the PBL. Ateneo carried the name Hapee in the Chairman's Cup. Gametime is 5:30 p.m.

Leader Shark (8-2), defending champion Welcoat (7-3), Blu Sun Power, Montaña Jewels and Hapee Toothpaste are already assured of semis seats.

An interested spectator is Ana Freezer Specialist (4-6) which is praying for an Osaka victory in order to gain a playoff for a semis slot.

Ateneo-Pioneer is favored to prevail over Osaka Iridology which has no reliable slotman and wingmen plus the fact that it possesses the league's weakest backcourt.

But the Katipunan-based dribblers will face an opponent hungry to play the spoiler's role. Composed mostly of La Salle players, Osaka is raring to avenge its first round loss and end its campaign on winning note.

Coach Pumaren... (From page A14)

Tanduay despite Tanduay's mighty lineup in the 1999, the season when it had the Fil-Am star Sonny Alvarado as its main pillar."

Alvarado was still a major force on the Tanduay camp in 2000 until he got axed by the Bureau of Immigration for producing fake papers to support his Fil-Am status.

But even as Alvarado was unceremoniously booted out of the country, another Fil-Am, Eric Menk, was still considered a force strong enough to power Tanduay to a championship stint.

"Mr. Bong Tan made a painful decision in replacing Chua as they are the best of friends," said the Tanduay executive.

The Pumaren deal also covers the transfer to Tanduay of Pumaren's assistants at Purefoods, namely his deputy coaches Gee Abanilla and Jun Tiongco.

Dan Rose, Pumaren's coach for strength and conditioning, will also leave Purefoods for Tanduay.

"Things happened so fast," said Pumaren. "I'm taking a big risk but I'm accepting the challenge because Tanduay is a very competitive team despite its depleted lineup."

It was not immediately known what would happen to Chua. Unconfirmed reports said he would be given a management post in the Tanduay hierarchy on a temporary basis.

Talks between Tan and Pumaren started in earnest during the Christmas season and "99 percent" of the talking points were ironed out by New Year's Eve.

TAN: "Clean slate needed."

Pumaren's salary at Tanduay was still being hammered out, though. [illegible] Purefoods coach, he [illegible] P230,000 a month.

Pumaren's most recent achievement was steering Purefoods to a gallant runner-up finish behind Governors Cup champion San Miguel Be[illegible] last December despite a lineup that was generally regarded as [illegible] championship caliber."

It was his second straight [illegible] up finish in the 2000 PBA [illegible] adding Purefoods' second-pl[illegible] achievement behind 2000 All Filipino champion Alaska.

Pumaren will carry with hi[illegible] Tanduay two PBA title[illegible] Swift in 1995–the All Filipi[illegible] PBA Commissioner's Cup.

Exodus expected, says Cruz

THE EXODUS of MBA players to the PBA was expected.

Rollie Cruz, chair of ABS-CBN sports, made the reaction yesterday upon being informed that at least 30 players from the ABS-CBN backed league have joined the PBA drafting on Jan. 14.

"This (player transfer) is a result of the mergers. There are really many players bound to be displaced so they have to seek employment elsewhere," said Cruz. "But the real stars are still with the MBA."

Being referred to were MBA superstars Romel Adducul of the Manila Metrostars, John Ferriols (Negros Slashers), Chris Clay (Laguna Lakers), Eddie Laure (Batangas Blades), Dorian Peña (Pasig-Rizal Pirates), Matthew Mitchell (Cebu Gems), Stephen Padilla (Cebu Gems), Felix Belano (Davao Gems) and Chris Calaguio (San Juan Knights); all of whom opted to stay behind.

From 14 teams last year, the MBA decided to "right size" to just eight with Manila being merged with Batangas, Negros with Iloilo, Davao with Socsargen, and Pampanga with Nueva Ecija. Other teams slated to compete in the MBA's fourth season are Cebu, Pasig-Rizal, San Juan and Laguna.

MBA chair and president Bert Lina said the MBA will open its fourth season in April. *Roy Luarca*

Dayrit: Silver finish not ideal yardstick

By June Navarro

FOR Olympic chieftain Celso Dayrit, a silver-medal finish wouldn't be an ideal yardstick for the selection of the national team bound for the Southeast Asian Games this year in Kuala Lumpur.

Dayrit said applying a silver medal as gauge for the composition of the RP delegation will deprive athletes who have the potential to improve in the run-up to the biennial games slated in September.

He added that since the SEA Games is still nine months away, there is still so much room for improvement.

"These bronze medalists still have the potential to improve since the SEA Games is still far away," he said.

Dayrit's insinuation went against the proposal of PSC chair Carlos Tuason, who earlier suggested that at least a silver medal achieved during the past SEA Games—1997 (Jakarta) and 1999 (Brunei)—would be a better barometer than a bronze medal.

"It's too stringent and [illegible] athletes, who have the pote[illegible] honors for the country [illegible] wear the national colors. [illegible]

Earlier, the PSC-POC [illegible] formed by Dayrit and Tuason agreed that a bronze-medal finish will be enough to earn a ticket in the RP delegation.

But Tuason suggested Tuesday that a silver medal would raise the competitive edge of the country considering the relatively tough opposition abroad

BI junks Cebu dribbler's petition

By Gerald G. Lacuarta

THE BUREAU of Immigration yesterday junked the petition of Cebu Gems Fil-Am player Kenny Evans for recognition as a Filipino citizen, dousing the player's bid in the PBA 2001 draft.

Immigration Commissioner Rufus Rodriguez said Evans' application for recognition was denied by the BI board of commissioners due to his failure to prove his Filipino citizenship.

Rodriguez said that although Evans claimed his mother was a Filipina, he was unable to submit convincing proofs that she was still a Filipino citizen when he was born in 1974.

This developed as Rodriguez ordered a strict screening and evaluation of all petitions for recognition as Filipinos by foreign players intending to play in the country's professional and amateur basketball leagues.

Rodriguez said the order was aimed at averting a repeat of the case of former Mobiline player Paul Asi Taulava, a Tongan who was deported last year for failure to prove the Filipino citizenship of his mother.

Also deported was Sonny Alvarado of Tanduay who was found guilty of submitting fake birth certificates to support his claim of Filipino citizenship.

Among those who have applied for recognition aside from Evans were Jason Henkey, Ken Gumpenberger, David Friedhof, Cesar Hernandez, Charles de Jesus, Jeremy Aniceta and Cali John Orfrecio.

The BI board has scheduled for hearing the petition of Friedhof, while those of Aniceta and Orfrecio remains pending as they still have to submit needed documents.

Henkey, Gumpenberger, Hernandez, and De Jesus have so far not submitted any documents yet to the bureau.

Rodriguez instructed the BI Task Force to evaluate and examine thoroughly their application papers and see to it that all requirements are properly submitted.

NBA results

Washington 115, Minnesota 108; Atlanta 92, Boston 81; Houston 100, Cleveland 95; New Jersey 120, Orlando 110; Milwaukee 104, Chicago 70; San Antonio 80, Miami 72; Indiana 91, Seattle 83; L.A. Clippers 110, Toronto 97; Sacramento 121, Phoenix 117, OT *AP*

Menk invited to RP team

TRYOUTS for the national men's basketball team begin at 6 p.m. today at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Invited to participate in the two-week tryouts to be conducted by the Basketball Association of the Philippines under the supervision of head coach Boyzie Zamar are Romel Adducul, Dino Manuel, Peter Martin, Frechie Ang, Chu-chu Serrano, Gilbert Demape, Jun Longalong, Omanzie Rodriguez, Chris Calaguio, Bruce Dacia, Chito Victolero, John Ferriols, John Cardel, Romy and Ruben dela Rosa, Homer Se, Stephen Padilla, Eddie Laure, Paul Guerrero, Jomar Tierra, Felix Belano, Ato Morano, Junel Mendiola, Biboy Simon, Chris Nicdao, Gilbert Castillo, Francis Adriano, Sonny Manucat, Peter Naron, Norman Gonzales, Richie Melencio, Rommel Daep, Yancy de Ocampo, Irvin Soto, Marc Pingris, Jenkins Mesina, Mark Magsumbol, Patrick Tiongco, Brit Reroma, Ronnie Zagala, Mc Caceres, Bitoy Omolon, Romar and Rolly Menor, Edgar Echavez, Roger Yap, Joshua Ramirez, Ren-Ren Ritualo, BJ Manalo, Mike Cortez, Enrico Villanueva, Rich Alvarez, Archer Calacar, Joselino Cruz, Roel Pazziuagan, Emer Oreta, Jojo Manalo, Alwin Espiritu and, if he gets his clearance, Eric Menk.

No more time frame to seek GM title–Torre

By Roy Luarca

FILIPINO grandmaster aspirants need not worry about time pressure anymore. Now, they have a lifetime to pursue about the ultimate chess dream.

GM Eugene Torre, the president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, yesterday bared that the time frame allotted to international masters to complete their GM titles was shelved during the last Chess Olympiad in Istanbul.

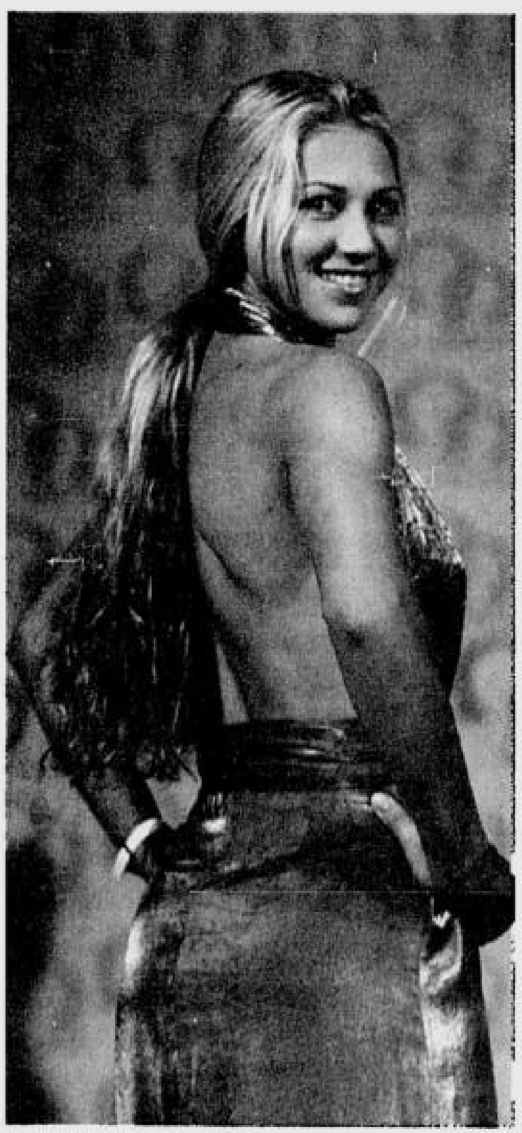
Among the direct beneficiaries of this new ruling are Filipino IMs Rogelio Barcenilla, Nelson Mariano, Fernie Donguines and Ronald Bancod, all of whom have earned GM results and are still active chess players.

Barcenilla is the prime candidate to be the country's fifth GM after Torre, also Asia's first, the late Rosendo Balinas, Rogelio Antonio and Bong Villamayor, who was conferred the title only last year.

Mariano, of course, is the most fortunate of the lot as the GM result he obtained in 1993 had actually exceeded the five-year grace period.

"This is a very encouraging development, especially for countries like ours which had difficulty sending players to international competitions," said Torre. "This would sustain the interest and aspiration of candidate GMs."

Toward this end, the NCFP will support Villamayor and Mariano in their campaign in the Goodrich tournament in Calcutta, India, next month.


REUTERS

ANNA'S BACK

Russian tennis player Anna Kournikova performs at a catwalk by a watch manufacturer in Hong Kong on Tuesday. Kournikova and Australian Jelena Dokic will participate in a tennis tournament which started Wednesday in the territory.

SPORTS ON TV

COMPILED BY LORENZO MANGUIAT

BASKETBALL: PBA Governors Cup Finals at 8:30 a.m. on ESPN

US NCAA-Kentucky Wildcats vs Louisville Cardinals at 10 a.m. (r) Notre Dame Fighting Irish vs Syracuse Orangemen tomorrow at 1 a.m. (r) on ESPN

NBA – Indiana Pacers vs Portland Trailblazers at 5:30 p.m. on IBC 13

GOLF: The 2000 Straits Cup Taipei, Day Four Highlights at 8 a.m. (r) on Star Sports

PGA Grand Slam Of Golf 2000, Day Two at 7 p.m. (r) on Star Sports

LPGA Mizuno Classic Second Round Highlights at 8:30 p.m. on ESPN

AMERICAN FOOTBALL: Super Bowl IX Highlights - Pittsburgh Steelers vs Minnesota Vikings at 6:30 a.m. (r), Super Bowl X Highlights - Pittsburgh vs Dallas Cowboys at 4 p.m. (r) on ESPN

Tennis listing on

REGISTRATION in the 12th edition of the annual Buddy Andrada Cup age group tennis championships ends at noon today, while the draw will be held at 2 p.m. at the Philta office.

Tournament referee Boy Leonora said that the two-weekend, Group 2 event, first tournament in the Philippine Tennis Association (Philta) calendar of events for 2001, will be played on Jan. 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 at the Rizal Memorial Tennis center.

Els dispatches rival; Sutton bumped off

MELBOURNE, Australia—It turned out to be an easy day for Ernie Els, and anything but for Hal Sutton in golf's Match Play Championship.

Els, the top seed and a late arrival, showed up at Metropolitan Golf Club at 7:30 a.m. Wednesday for his first practice round—two hours before the first round began.

Of the 34 Americans in the field, only a dozen survived the first round and face a long trip back across Pacific.

The greatest casualty was Sutton, and there were few complaints. A tear in the soft tissue in his lower back left him in tremendous pain. He had four small bruises from where therapists had dug their fingers into his back for a deep massage.

But he gutted it out, and with some help from Nick O'Hern, won four of the final six holes to force a playoff. Sutton had a 15-foot birdie putt to win on the 20th, but it turned away. His 8-iron into the third hole was pulled left—a move Sutton fought all day—and into a bunker, where he failed to get up and down for par.

The other match to go 21 holes went to Australian Craig Parry, who holed a 20-foot birdie putt on the 18th and beat Dennis Paulson when the American missed a 10-footer for par on the third extra hole.

But no one played as many holes as Els.

He finally dragged himself away from his beach house, beer and barbecues in South Africa, arriving in Australia at 8:20 p.m. Tuesday, just 18 hours before his match.

Els came to the course seven hours before his tee time and squeezed in 16 holes of practice. That's allowed in match play, since players are not competing against the field but a single opponent — Greg Kraft could have done the same.

"I shouldn't have any problems sleeping tonight," Els said after beating Kraft, 3 and 2.

Vijay Singh, the No. 3 seed, easily dispatched of Kevin Sutherland, ending their match on the 16th hole. Fourth-seeded Tom Lehman had to work against Australian Greg Chalmers before finally closing him out, 2 and 1.

There were no substantial upsets, because most of the biggest names didn't bother to make the trip _ Woods, David Duval, Phil Mickelson, Davis Love III, and even Europe's best three players.

It was quite a show without him.

Jean Van de Velde resurrected memories of Carnoustie, where he took triple bogey on the final hole to blow the British Open. He was 4-up on Duffy Waldorf with six holes to play, then watched the lead disappear. *AP*

REUTERS

MEMBERS of the gallery watch as Els tees off during his match against Kraft at the World Match Play Championship at the Metropolitan Golf Course in Melbourne. Els defeated Kraft, 3 and 2.

Seles lifts US past Russia

PERTH, Australia—The United States, led by a straight-sets win by Monica Seles, ended Russia's chances of winning the Hopman Cup mixed teams tennis tournament with a 2-1 victory Wednesday.

The match came down the final set of the deciding mixed doubles, after Seles had beaten Elena Likhovtseva 6-3, 6-3 and Marat Safin outlasted Jan-Michael Gambill 6-4, 6-7(6-8), 6-3.

In the mixed doubles, Seles and Gambill rallied to beat Likhovtseva and Safin 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Seles, unaccustomed to playing midmorning, again made a slow start. But as she had done against Slovakia in the previous round, she made a swift recovery and bounced back after dropping her serve in the opening game to level at 2-2.

Until then, Likhovtseva had played almost flawless tennis, but errors soon began to creep into her game and she was broken after hitting two double-faults and putting an easy smash at the net beyond the baseline. *AP*

Derby slated

MANDALUYONG Coliseum, now recognized as the venue of bigtime cockfighting, presents its opening salvo for 2001, the 2nd Ucap Cobra/Blue Blade Balbina 6-Cock Derby on Jan. 9 and 11. It is hosted by the Cobra Group and engineer Sonny Lagon.

Sponsored by Sagupaan Super Feeds and Lakpue Drug Inc., the event is the second of 13 cockfests which will serve as basis in selecting the 2000-2001 Ucap Cocker of the Year winner.

Meanwhile, the Mandaluyong Coliseum 9-Cock International Derby, hosted by businessman Vic Yu, is slated on Jan. 30, Feb. 1 and 3.

Nine American cockerbreeders, led by last year's runner-up winner Chuck Berry of Oklahoma, Paul Sparks of Alabama and Bobby Jones of Texoma Game Club, one of the biggest cockfighting centers in Mid-America, have confirmed their commitment to see action.

- Dayrit wants bronze standard
- Els ousts Match Play rival
- BI junks Fil-Am petition

A13

SPORTS

AL S. MENDOZA, Editor ▨ EDWIN M. VILLANUEVA, Assistant Editor

Lewis wins Defensive Player award

BALTIMORE —Ray Lewis fought for his life against murder charges, then became the most dynamic defender in the NFL as he led the Baltimore Ravens to the playoffs. After the most trying year of his life, and perhaps his most productive on the field, Lewis easily won The Associated Press Defensive Player of the Year award announced Tuesday.

- 32 MBA players to PBA draft

A13

Coach Pumaren goes to Tanduay

By Al S. Mendoza
Sports Editor

A DONE deal?

Almost.

Derrick Pumaren, one of today's most respected coaches in the Philippine Basketball Association, is almost a cinch to coach Tanduay beginning this season.

This was confirmed yesterday by Pumaren in an inteview with the writer.

Only the finer points of the contract are being cemented by Tanduay management and Pumaren.

"It's virtually a done deal," said Pumaren. "Of course, I'm excited."

As of late last night, the writer learned that top-level management of Tanduay will announce shortly Pumaren's appointment amid a determined bid by Bong Tan to find a replacement for Alfrancis Chua.

PUMAREN: "I'm excited."

Chua was the coach of Tanduay when Tanduay was readmitted by the PBA in 1999.

Tan, the youthful Tanduay team owner, is also set to revamp Chua's entire coaching staff in his renewed bid to give "a fresh mandate for Tanduay" for the coming season.

"We need to have a clean slate and we must start by revamping the entire coaching staff," a Tanduay executive quoted Tan as saying.

The same executive said Tan initiated the sweeping revamp "because he was disgusted over Chua's inability to win a PBA crown for

COACH/A13

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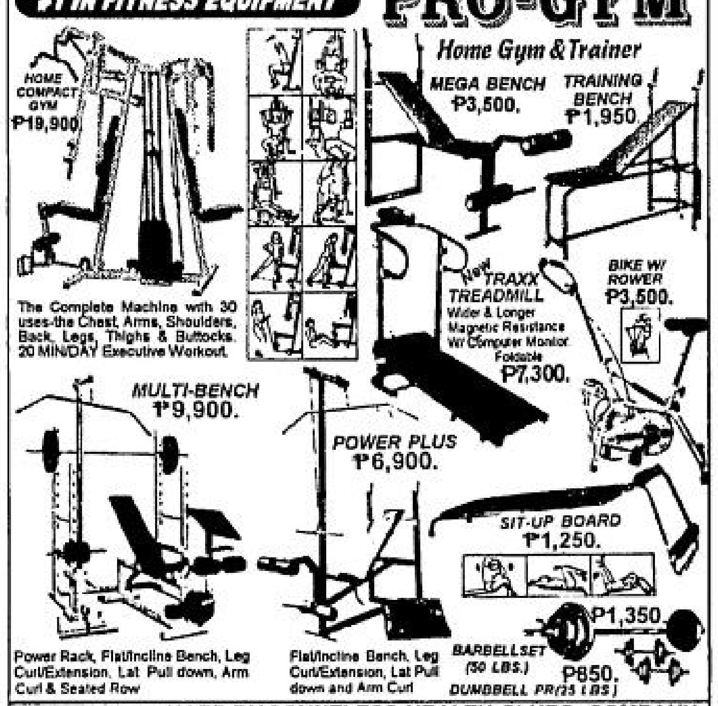
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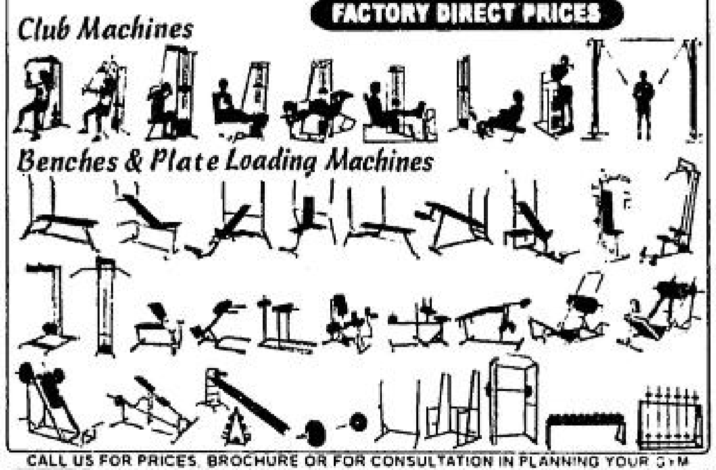
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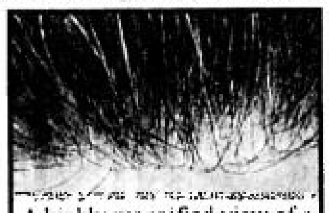

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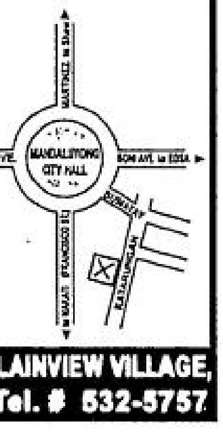
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HONDA

Medicare for the poor

NAVOTAS Mayor Toby Tiangco and the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (Philhealth) have signed a memorandum of agreement to provide health services to about 1,500 poor families in the town, including free hospitalization in accredited hospitals.

METRO

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

Who can use e-Pass lanes

THE PHILIPPINE Skyway Corp. said it will strictly implement the 24-hour e-Pass and no-change/toll coupon lanes starting Jan. 7. Motorists without e-Pass tags who use the e-Pass lanes will be apprehended for traffic violation. E-Pass lanes are in Nichols A and B, Sucat, Bicutan, Alabang Doña Soledad, Skyway and Calamba.

Old man dies lonely death in Quezon City

By Philip C. Tubeza

AFTER a fast truck hit Juan Magalona, 70, on Dec. 23, he hung onto life for five days. But he finally died a lonely death on Tuesday in a Quezon City hospital.

After the accident, no relative came forward to look after Magalona while he was in the hospital. And even in death, no one has come to claim his body.

According to investigator PO2 Perlito L. Datu, Magalona's last known address was Tarum, Libi, Camarines Sur.

Police said Magalona was crossing Edsa in front of the Baliuag Transit terminal in Quezon City about 4 p.m. on Dec. 28 when an Isuzu truck (TRZ 163) hit him. The truck was driven by Jorge C. Bringino, 30, of San Miguel Street, Balubaran, Valenzuela.

Police said Bringino was driving toward Caloocan City from Ortigas Avenue. He had just emerged from the Cubao underpass and was on Edsa's northbound lane when he hit Magalona, police said.

Magalona suffered head injuries. The impact also shattered the truck's windshield.

Police later arrested Bringino, who now faces charges of reckless imprudence resulting in homicide.

Datu said Magalona must have been on his way to the province when the accident happened. The terminal of Superline bus, which goes to Bicol, was on the other side of Edsa, he said.

Police found Magalona's ID card, which showed his Bicol address, and P1,000 in cash inside a bag which also contained his clothes.

Magalona was brought to the East Avenue Medical Center (EAMC) and was confined there for five days before he died of complications from his head injuries.

Datu said police had hoped somebody would show up at the hospital when doctors were trying to save Magalona.

"But the doctors said that the bleeding inside his head could not be stopped," Datu said.

Magalona's body is still at the EAMC. Police are calling on his relatives or friends to claim the body.

Mason stabbed dead for trying to stop fight

MASON Ronaldo L. Cerdenia, 34, only wanted his sister-in-law and legal brother-in-law to stop quarreling on New Year's Day. He ended up dead.

Cerdenia, of Urban Street, Barangay Payatas, Quezon City, intervened in the quarrel between his sister-in-law Dona Fontalba and her husband Alfredo Remozosa.

Fontalba's sister Norma is Cerdenia's wife.

Remozosa resented the intervention and stabbed Cerdenia when the latter tried to pacify him and Fontalba, said investigator PO2 Joseph Dino.

Cerdenia, Fontalba and Remozosa were in Cerdenia's house when the couple started fighting Monday afternoon.

Cerdenia tried to keep them cool, but Remozosa lunged at him with a kitchen knife, hitting him on the chest, Dino said.

Remozosa ran while Cerdenia was brought to the Fairview General Hospital. Dr. Nini Reyes declared the victim dead on arrival at about 5 p.m.

Cerdenia's body was brought to the PNP Crime Laboratory for autopsy while the police are hunting down Remozosa.

Philip C. Tubeza

Payatas must stay open-Mathay

ROMY HOMILLADA

VERGARA'S PAYATAS

A garbage dump has emerged in Barangay Vergara, Mandaluyong City, shocking residents and barangay officials. As in many other parts of the metropolis, the city's garbage has not been collected for several days now.

By Andrea T. Echavez

QUEZON CITY Mayor Ismael Mathay Jr. said he would not close the controversial Payatas dumpsite in the city until local authorities find an alternative dump.

Mathay made the statement amid threats that Quezon City residents would haul local government officials to court if Payatas would remain open as a dump.

But Mathay, who is on his last term as mayor, assured Payatas residents that the dumping would be limited only to garbage collected in the city.

"As much as I would like to accommodate other local government units, I can't," said Mathay in a statement on Wednesday.

He said Malacañang had issued a presidential directive in November to open the garbage dump but only for the city's exclusive use.

Payatas residents had assailed the continued use of the dumpsite and cited a presidential order signed by former Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora that provided for its use only until Dec. 31, 2000.

The San Mateo Sanitary Landfill (SMSL) in Rizal province, where most of Metro Manila's garbage used to be dumped, was also closed on Dec. 31.

Semirara Island in Antique was proposed as an alternative dump to the SMSL. But this met angry opposition from local residents and environmentalists, who said Semirara's fragile ecology would be endangered by the tons of garbage that would be dumped there.

The Antique provincial government also refused to accept Metro Manila's waste, leaving local governments in the metropolis in a frantic search for a new dumpsite.

Faced with a bigger garbage crisis, Mathay said operations in Payatas would be limited to "transfer station purposes and controlled dumping operations only."

He did not say where the garbage would be taken later or if waste dumped in Payatas would be moved out of the dump at all.

Earlier this week, four Payatas-based homeowners organizations vowed to seek an injunction if the city government refused to shut down the dumpsite, the scene of a garbage avalanche that buried thousands of homes and killed 217 people.

The bodies of at least 80 people are believed to be still buried under tons of garbage.

Members of four groups—the July 10 Payatas Victims Organization-Kadamay, Samahang Tunay, Sangkap and Samahang Magkakapitbahay—said they would barricade all roads leading to Payatas if the local government refused to heed their call.

Police trainees to help keep tight watch against bombings

By Agnes E. Donato

NATIONAL Capital Regional Police Office director Chief Supt. Edgar Aglipay wants more warm bodies, including police recruits, to help secure the metropolis from bomb threats following five powerful explosions that killed 14 people on Dec. 30.

The latest to receive a threatening call was a Pasig City building where the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and a United Overseas Bank branch hold office.

Senior Supt. Simeon Dizon Sr., director of the Eastern Police District, said training of new recruits of the Philippine National Police Training Institute was interrupted because of the bomb alert.

Training began in December and was supposed to end on Jan. 15.

But Dizon said Aglipay "may request to delay the return of the recruits to augment the deployed force and help secure vital installations."

Already, 47 men and 75 recruits were deployed to the EPD.

The trainees will augment the two Marine battalions and other police and military personnel who had been called in to patrol the stations of the Light Railway Transit and the Metro Rail Transit.

The Special Action Force contributed 150 men while 200 others were drawn from different units in Camp Crame.

Aglipay is coordinating with Metro Manila mayors through Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Jejomar Binay, who has solicited the help of barangay officials.

The joint forces are expected to man malls, banks, pawnshops, gasoline stations, schools, churches, and jeepney and bus terminals in Metro Manila.

In Pasig City, a branch manager of the United Overseas Bank Philippines (formerly Westmont Bank) on Julio Vargas Avenue in Ortigas Center received a phone call from an unidentified man at about 8:30 a.m., police said.

The bank is on the ground floor of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines building.

Bank manager Rommel Dabut said that when he received the call, "I thought the man was just going to report a lost card, or something like that, because he sounded nervous."

"I just wanted you to know that Westmont Bank and Equitable-PCI Bank branches in Binondo and Ortigas and MetroBank in Makati have already gotten bomb threats," he quoted the caller as telling him.

Dabut said in a phone interview that the caller sounded to be about 20 years old and had a Manila accent.

"The message was vague," he said. "He did not actually say there was a bomb hidden somewhere in the building."

But he called the police anyway. Policemen from a nearby station immediately responded, followed by members of the Explosive Ordinance Disposal unit.

Everyone inside the three-story building, including lawyers and employees of the IBP, were evacuated until the bomb disposal group had declared it safe.

The threat turned out to be a dud. But police told employees in the building to watch out for suspicious-looking packages.

In Quezon City, Mayor Ismael Mathay Jr. call all hospitals and other medical facilities to open their doors to the victims of last Saturday's bombings. He particularly instructed the East Avenue Medical Center to provide first-class treatment to those being treated in the hospital.

Mathay picked up the tab for the bombing victims who were brought to the EAMC for treatment.

"The citizens should be spared and not be used as pawns in the political squabbles," Mathay said.

Dec. 31 slay leaves Cavite barangay in fear

TERROR gripped a barangay in Bacoor, Cavite after its chair was murdered on New Year's Eve.

Tarsicio Dalman was killed in a hail of Armalite fire as he and some friends were celebrating at his residence in Barangay Molino-6, Soldiers' Hill, Bacoor.

The murder prompted Cavite Gov. Bong Revilla to urge police to get to the bottom of the case and arrest the killers.

Revilla is offering P200,000 to anyone who has information that will lead to the arrest of the suspects.

"Cavite's violent era is gone and I ask the people to be ever vigilant against its return," he said.

A witness said five men on motorcycles drove by Dalman's residence and shot him. He said the execution was timed with the explosion of firecrackers.

Dalman was a strong supporter of Lani Mercado-Revilla, the governor's wife who is running for mayor of Bacoor.

The Dalman murder was the third in the province in five months. All the victims were political supporters of the Revillas.

The first was killed in August at Paula Homes in Barangay Molino 1. In September, men on a motorcycle shot to death Barangay Molino 3 councilman Oscar Ramos.

Spaghetti with 'watusi' kills MCU student

A 19-YEAR-OLD girl on Tuesday died after accidentally eating a piece of 'watusi' (dancing firecracker) mixed with her spaghetti on New Year's Day in Caloocan City.

Maria Mae Sohitado, a third year pharmacy student of the Manila Central University (MCU), died from sudden cardiac arrest at 10:20 p.m. Tuesday, police said.

Investigation by PO2 Jaime Basa of the Caloocan Police Station Investigation Division showed that Sohitado and her brothers were fetching water outside their house on Waling-Waling Street in Bagong Barrio about 2 a.m. on Jan. 1. After fetching water, they ate spaghetti outside their house.

At about 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Sohitado began to vomit and suffer from diarrhea, police said. She was rushed to the MCU Hospital.

Before she died nine hours later, Sohitado told doctors she had ingested at least half a piece of watusi, which is an inch-long red firecracker that crackles when rubbed on a rough surface.

Sohitado's mother Lucresia, 52, said the watusi might have landed on her daughter's plate of spaghetti when she left the plate outside their house on Jan. 1.

Christian V. Esguerra

Caloocan vice mayor faces rap for doctoring city resolution

By Christian V. Esguerra

SUSPECTED of falsifying documents, Caloocan City Vice Mayor Oscar Malapitan and another local official are facing charges before the Sandiganbayan.

Special prosecutor Evangeline Grafil found sufficient grounds to charge Malapitan and city council secretary Lorenzo Sunga Jr. for allegedly tampering with a resolution that required three city officials to explain during a council session in July 2000.

The Office of the Ombudsman recommended a P24,000 bail each for the temporary release of Malapitan and Sunga.

Preliminary investigation by Grafil showed Malapitan, presiding officer of the city council, allegedly authorized Sunga to issue a "fictitious" resolution that required Mayor Reynaldo Malonzo's secretary Francisco Veza, budget officer Juanito Ortiz and treasurer Hernando Banta to explain before a council session why a Malonzo memorandum reduced the number of job order workers.

Malonzo is known as Malapitan's bitter rival.

In her letter of recommendation, Grafil said the fictitious resolution might have caused "damage and prejudice to the public interest."

Councilor Edgar Erice, a Malonzo supporter, said the case "should serve as a lesson to Malapitan to first study before he makes a ruling because we (administration councilors) will not hesitate to sue him again if he does another abuse."

Fire hits Tatalon houses

ABOUT 30 families in Quezon City lost their homes in an early morning fire yesterday.

The 30-minute blaze started at the two-story house of Maria Lourdes N. Medura, 42, in Purok 8 Area 6 of Barangay Tatalon, Quezon City. It quickly spread to adjoining houses, said investigator FO2 Eduardo Biscocho of the Quezon City fire department.

Arson investigators have yet to determine the cause of the fire or the damage, he added.

Biscocho said the fire started in the ceiling of Medura's home at 5:51 a.m. and quickly spread to the neighboring houses.

The fire reached the second alarm before it was finally put out at 6:32 a.m.

No one was reported injured. Investigators are still going through the debris while Quezon City's social welfare department is taking care of the victims.

Monday, a couple and their four children were burned to death in their house in Tondo, Manila. Their maid was the main suspect.

Philip C. Tubeza

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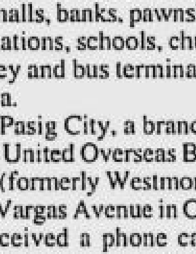
A twinge of guilt

On Target



Ramon Tulfo

PRESIDENT Erap has offered to adopt a three-year-old boy who lost a leg when a bomb exploded inside a coach of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) at the Blumentritt station in Sta. Cruz, Manila, last Saturday.

Mr. Estrada was overcome with grief and angered at the sight of the boy who could only give his first name, Emmanuel. The boy identified his father only as Joel.

"That's the least he could do to atone for his sin," said an office clerk. "*Mabuti naman at naawa pa siya sa bata* (It's a good thing that he has taken pity on the child."

In short, a twinge of guilt.

***

Countless citizens suspect that Erap or some of his close aides had a hand in the series of bombings that killed 14 people and injured nearly a hundred others.

They believe the bombings were an act of desperation. The former movie actor, who was elected by an overwhelming majority, is in danger of losing his job. The testimony of prosecution witnesses at the impeachment trial has corroborated charges that he is a corrupt and incompetent head of state.

The bombings, many people believe, were meant to divert public attention from the impeachment trial. The expected chaos would justify the declaration of martial law or state of emergency by the President, so the popular perception goes. The scenario is similar to that which preceded the declaration of martial law by President Marcos in 1972.

***

Even if the President is not the culprit he's still at the losing end. His credibility has been tainted further by the bombings.

A leader can only be effective if he has the complete trust and respect of his subjects.

Otherwise, that leader has to go.

***

Presidential spokesman Ernie Maceda is so vehement in denying his boss had a hand in the bombings that he made an insulting remark.

Maceda said Mr. Estrada doesn't have the intellect to plot such a dastardly crime.

If he doesn't have the intellect, Mr. Ambassador, perhaps he has the gall?

As they say in Tagalog, *makapal ang apog*.

***

"Why would Erap commit such a dastardly act when he loves the poor and most of the victims were poor people?" a friend of mine commented.

Why wouldn't he? Bombing public vehicles, which are the mode of transportation of the *masa*, would draw suspicion away from the President who purports to be the champion of the poor.

In a novel about murder, would the reader ever suspect the harmless-looking butler did it until he had read the whole story?

Local visual-effects artists make their mark

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

"SPIRIT Warriors" has been getting good crowds despite its relative lack of star value because its strongest suit, its fantastic and fantasticating visualization, is dynamically appealing to young viewers.

Of course, when kids watch a movie, their parents have to accompany them, so that adds substantially to the film's total audience.

The movie's high-tech visual effects are imaginatively conceptualized and executed, with the film spending months on post-production both here and abroad to make sure that the completed shots and scenes make a vivid impression on moviegoers.

The production succeeds in captivating its young viewers—and the adults who accompany them. As they react positively to the high-tech images that come one after the other, we perceive a growing sense of pride that local film people can now compete favorably with visual effects artists abroad.

However, as is usually the case with high-tech showcases like this, the movie's writing can't keep up with the striking visuals. As a result, the movie's technological marvels upstage other key elements of the production, and the film loses its unity and sense of balance.

The movie is about a group of young spirit questors who are drawn to a mysterious house in the province where some disturbing paranormal phenomena have been manifesting themselves.

It turns out that an investigator (**Joel Torre**) has gotten his hands on an old tablet that contains incantatory prayers that enable an ancient, evil elemental to come to horrific and dangerous life again in today's world.

The monster morphs into various forms and has an army of bizarre creatures determined to do its bidding, and to kill anybody who tries to thwart its evil will. That includes the frisky spirit questors, who aren't aware of the huge risk they are taking in looking for the investigator and the monster he's protecting.

Eventually, despite the investigator's efforts to keep its existence a secret, the monster ferociously manifests itself and sends the spirit questors scampering away.

To thicken the plot, the questor's adviser reveals an ornery streak of his own, and the questors have to contend with him as well.

Of course, everything gets sorted out in the end, but the thin storyline and the movie's two-dimensional and facile characterizations dampen

LOCAL/ A17

SM CINEMA GUIDE
SM Dial-A-Movie • Tel. 633-9999
NOW SHOWING

SM CITY BACOOR 4173868

1	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
2	DOLBY SURROUND	MEET THE PARENTS
3	DOLBY DIGITAL	THE 6TH DAY
4	DOLBY SURROUND	GATAS
5	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
6	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
7	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
8	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN

SM CENTERPOINT 7149522 • 7161416

1	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
2	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	DTS	MEET THE PARENTS
4	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
5	DOLBY DIGITAL	THE 6TH DAYS
6	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
7	DOLBY SURROUND	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
8	DOLBY SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
9	DOLBY SURROUND	GATAS
10	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 9350749

1	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
2	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
3	DOLBY SURROUND	THE 6TH DAY
4	DOLBY DIGITAL	MEET THE PARENTS
5	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
6	DOLBY SURROUND	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
7	DOLBY DIGITAL	THE 6TH DAYS
8	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
9	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
10	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
11	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
12	DOLBY SURROUND	GATAS

SM CITY MANILA 6239240

1	DOLBY DIGITAL	MEET THE PARENTS
2	DOLBY DIGITAL	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
3	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
4	DOLBY SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
5	DOLBY DIGITAL	CHARLIE'S ANGELS
6	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	THE 6TH DAYS
7	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
8	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
9	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
10	DOLBY SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
11	DOLBY SURROUND	GATAS
12	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS

GUADALUPE COMM'L CTR 8820950

1	ULTRA SURROUND	GATAS
2	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
3	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN

SM MEGAMALL 6331901 • 6329401

1	DOLBY DIGITAL	TANGING YAMAN
2	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
3	DOLBY DIGITAL	THE 6TH DAYS
4	DTS	MEET THE PARENTS
5	DOLBY SURROUND	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
6	DOLBY SURROUND	DEATH ROW
7	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
8	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
9	DOLBY SURROUND	GATAS
10	DOLBY SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
11	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
12	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY

SM CITY NORTH EDSA 9295452

1	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
2	DOLBY SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
3	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
4	DOLBY SURROUND	GATAS
5	DOLBY SURROUND	MEET THE PARENTS
6	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
7	DTS	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
8	DOLBY DIGITAL	THE 6TH DAYS
9	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
10	DOLBY SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
11	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	DEATH ROW
12	DOLBY SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO

SM SOUTHMALL 8066888 • 8066782

1	ULTRA SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
2	ULTRA SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
3	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	THE 6TH DAYS
4	ULTRA SURROUND	MEET THE PARENTS
5	ULTRA SURROUND	SUGATANG PUSO
6	ULTRA SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
7	ULTRA SURROUND	GATAS
8	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
9	ULTRA SURROUND	DEATH ROW
10	ULTRA SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS

TUTUBAN CENTER 2514302

1	ULTRA SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
2	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
3	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
4	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS

SM CEBU 2313875

1	DOLBY SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
2	ULTRA SURROUND	DEATH ROW
3	ULTRA SURROUND	PING LACSON STORY
4	ULTRA SURROUND	GATAS
5	ULTRA SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
6	ULTRA SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
7	DOLBY SURROUND	UNBREAKABLE

SM ILOILO 3209422

1	ULTRA SURROUND	NAGHUHUMIYAW
2	ULTRA SURROUND	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
3	ULTRA SURROUND	THE GRINCH
4	ULTRA SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN
5	ULTRA SURROUND	THE 6TH DAYS
6	ULTRA SURROUND	CHARLIE'S ANGELS
7	ULTRA SURROUND	CROCODILE
8	ULTRA SURROUND	JUAN & TED

SM PAMPANGA 7126015

1	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	THE 6TH DAYS
2	DOLBY DIGITAL EX	CROCODILE
3	DOLBY SURROUND	SPIRIT WARRIORS
4	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	SUGO NG TONDO
5	SYNTHESIZED SURROUND	GATAS
6	DOLBY SURROUND	TANGING YAMAN

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4. THE 6TH DAY
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2. GATAS
3. TANGING YAMAN
4. MEET THE PARENTS
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6. EMPERORS NEW GROOVE

BACOLOD (034)441-0463

1. THE 6TH DAY
2. TANGING YAMAN
3. CHARLIE'S ANGELS
4. SUGATANG PUSO
5. PING LACSON STORY
6. SPIRIT WARRIORS

DOLBY dts SDDS

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE
ARANETA CENTER THEATERS 911-3101

ALI MALL CINEPLEX-1	TANGING YAMAN
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-2	GATAS
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-3 (DDS)	MEET THE PARENTS
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	THE 6TH DAY
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	SPIRIT WARRIORS
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7 (DOLBY)	THE 6TH DAY
FARMERS PLAZA-1 (DOLBY)	THE 6TH DAY
FARMERS PLAZA-2 (DOLBY)	GATAS
FIESTA CARNIVAL	PING LACSON STORY
NEW FRONTIER	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
MIRAMAR	SUGATANG PUSO
ODEON	TANGING YAMAN
ODEON-2	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
ROBEN	SPIRIT WARRIORS
TANDEM-1	SPIRIT WARRIORS
TANDEM-2	NAGHUHUMIYAW
TIMES	KAILANGAN KO'Y IKAW / BIYAHENG LANGIT
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	MARKOVA COMFORT GAY
ACT-2	IKAW LAMANG
ACT-3	CLASS AGAIN
ACT-4	KAAGAW
CORONET-2	GATAS
QUEZON-1	DEATH ROW
REMAR	TANGING YAMAN
REMAR-2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
CUBAO	
OCEAN SUPERAMA	MARKOVA. COMFORT GAY
OCEAN CINEMA-A	LARO SA BAGA
OCEAN CINEMA-B	GUEVARRA
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
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STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-54091 TO 19)
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CINEMA-2	GATAS
CINEMA-3	TANGING YAMAN
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE 6TH DAY
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	DEATH ROW
CINEMA-6	PING LACSON STORY
CINEMA-7	MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY
CINEMA-8	SPIRIT WARRIORS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	THE 6TH DAY
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE 6TH DAY
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	MEET THE PARENTS
CINEMA-12	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
CINEMA-14	GATAS
CINEMA-15	TANGING YAMAN
LORES	
CINEMA-2	THE 6TH DAY
CINEMA-3	TANGING YAMAN
POWER PLANT CINEMA	
CINEMA-1	TANGING YAMAN
CINEMA-2	THE 6TH DAY
CINEMA-3	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
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3	GATAS
4	TANGING YAMAN

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1	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE, In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2	THE 6TH DAY, In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	THE 6TH DAY THX, In DSD/SDDS/DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	DEATH ROW, In DTS DIGITAL SOUND, Art Film
5	TANGING YAMAN, In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
6	MEET THE PARENTS, In DTS/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
7	SPIRIT WARRIORS, In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

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1	GATAS, In DOLBY STEREO DIGITAL SOUND
2	THE 6TH DAY, In SONY DYNAMIC DIGITAL SOUND
3	MEET THE PARENTS, In DOLBY STEREO DIGITAL SOUND
4	SOON TO OPEN Onstage

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2	THE 6TH DAY, In DSD DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3	MEET THE PARENTS, In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE, In DTS DIGITAL SOUND
5	TANGING YAMAN, In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

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MOVIE GUIDE
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Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA (Muntinlupa) tel 850 3571 or 72

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2	THE 6TH DAYS
3	MEET THE PARENTS
4	MEET THE PARENTS
5	THE 6TH DAYS
6	DEATH ROW
7	EMPERORS GROOVE
8	TANGING YAMAN
9	SPIRIT WARRIORS
10	GATAS

Pearl Plaza Cinemas (Parañaque) tel. 853.4486

1	GATAS
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	TANGING YAMAN
4	DEATH ROW
5	RESERVE
6	THE 6TH DAYS
Golden Pearl THX	

Masagana CINEMAX 1-2 & 3 (Kalaw) tel 536.4315

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	MEET THE PARENTS
3	RESERVE

Masagana CINEMA GOLD (Pasay) tel 831.6603

1	GATAS
2	THE 6TH DAYS
3	TANGING YAMAN

starmall Movies (Shaw Blvd.) tel 724.4986

1	GATAS
2	PING LACSON STORY
3	TANGING YAMAN
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE 6TH DAYS
5	SPIRIT WARRIORS

Metropolis (Alabang) tel 543.4001

1	PING LACSON STORY
2	GATAS
3	TANGING YAMAN
4	DEATH ROW
5	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
6	THE 6TH DAYS
7	SPIRIT WARRIORS
8	MEET THE PARENTS

Uniwide Metromall (Las Piñas) tel. 873.5606 loc. 1074

1	NAKALIMOT NA PAG-IBIG
2	BIYAK NA GUBAT
3	RESERVE
4	DROGA
5	RESERVE
6	RESERVE

Uniwide Coastal Mall (Parañaque) tel 879.0001 loc. 2152

1	RESERVE
2	AKO ANG LALAGOT
3	RATRATAN
4	TATLONG PUSO

Center Plaza Cinema (Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	SPIRIT WARRIORS
2	TANGING YAMAN

FCM FAIRVIEW CENTER MALL, INC. tel 930.9515

1	TANGING YAMAN
2	GATAS
3	THE 6TH DAYS

Spring (Libertad, Pasay City) tel 831.7864

1	GATAS
A	THE 6TH DAYS

JC Cinema (Parañaque) tel 825.8626

1	GATAS
3	TANGING YAMAN

GOTESCO CINEMA

City (Manila) tel 734.8568

1	GATAS
2	PING LACSON STORY
3	DEATH ROW
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS
5	TANGING YAMAN
6	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
7	MEET THE PARENTS
8	THE 6TH DAYS
9	THE 6TH DAYS

Caloocan tel 362.3508

2	THE 6TH DAYS
3	PING LACSON STORY
4	GATAS
5	
6	

Grand Central (Caloocan) tel 364.3761

1	GATAS
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	TANGING YAMAN
4	THE 6TH DAYS
5	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
6	THE 6TH DAYS
7	MEET THE PARENTS
8	DEATH ROW
9	PING LACSON STORY

Commonwealth tel 951.0083

1	MEET THE PARENTS
2	GATAS
3	TANGING YAMAN
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS
5	THE 6TH DAYS
6	PING LACSON STORY
7	THE 6TH DAYS
8	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE

Ortigas tel 656.6795

1	PING LACSON STORY
2	MEET THE PARENTS
3	GATAS
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS
5	THE 6TH DAYS
6	TANGING YAMAN
7	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE

Universal (Manila) tel 733.2470

1	GATAS

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1	GATAS

Dilson (Manila) tel 734.7724
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Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	GATAS
2	THE 6TH DAYS
3	TANGING YAMAN
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS

Prima (Pasig) tel 641.1215

1	
3	GATAS

Super Cinerama (Manila) tel 733.4226 or 733.4238

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	SPIRIT WARRIORS
3	MEET THE PARENTS
4	GATAS
5	TANGING YAMAN

Divisoria Mall (Manila) tel 244.4560 or 244.4619

1	GATAS
2	THE 6TH DAYS
3	TANGING YAMAN
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS
5	PING LACSON STORY
6	DEATH ROW

Baclaran LRT Cinema tel 512.0115 or 512.0116

1	GATAS
2	PING LACSON STORY
3	THE 6TH DAYS

Cinema 2000 Target Mall (Sta. Rosa Laguna) tel (049) 534.2185, 534.2198

1	TANGING YAMAN
2	GATAS
3	THE 6TH DAYS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	GATAS
2	TANGING YAMAN
3	THE 6TH DAYS
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS

Lianas Cinema (Alabang) tel 850.1276

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	GATAS
3	SPIRIT WARRIORS
4	TANGING YAMAN

Lianas MovieCity (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	GATAS
3	MEET THE PARENTS
4	SPIRIT WARRIORS
5	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE

Olivarez Tri-Cinema (Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	MEET THE PARENTS
3	GATAS

Olivarez Los Baños tel (049) 536.5101

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
3	GATAS

Olivarez Tagaytay tel (046) 413.03.1

1	
2	TANGING YAMAN
3	NAGHUHUMIYAW

Morales Cinema (Biñan) tel (049) 511.9736

1	GATAS
2	THE 6TH DAYS
3	

Cabuyao (Laguna City) tel (049) 243.2783

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	GATAS

Fourstep (Cavite) tel (046) 416.2385

1	

Emperor (Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1	TANGING YAMAN
2	GATAS
3	THE 6TH DAYS

Fiesta World Mall (Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	TANGING YAMAN
2	DEATH ROW
3	THE 6TH DAYS
4	THE 6TH DAYS

Berma tel 879.2188

1	RESERVE
2	RESERVE

CitiMall (Parañaque) tel 820.7269

1	GATAS
2	THE 6TH DAYS
3	EMPERORS NEW GROOVE
4	TANGING YAMAN

Jade Cinema (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1	THE 6TH DAYS
2	DEATH ROW
3	SUGATANG PUSO
4	GATAS

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Hear the Difference, Feel the Excitement

Local visual-effects artists make their mark

(From page A16)

viewers' interest in the proceedings, despite the production's compelling visuals.

Still, the movie has a number of arresting highligths that viewers can admiringly recall even after they have left the theater. Imagine the heightened impact, therefore, if, in their next fantasy-adventure outing, director **Chito Roño** and his Roadrunner production crew were able to combine exciting visuals and textured, imaginative storytelling. That would more overwhelmingly confirm our local film people's expertise in the fantasy-adventure realm.

Since that dynamic storytelling is not to be found in this movie, however, it tries to make up for its thin plotting by energizing some of its young actors' performances.

Since the proceedings are fear-inducing, viewers are particularly grateful for the comic relief provided by **Vhong Navarro**'s deadpan antics.

'The legend of Bagger Vance'

NOW that he's pretty much put his acting career on hold, **Robert Redford** is concentrating on his annual Sundance filmfest for independent movies. And, once in a blue moon, he directs a film.

Redford's latest movie is "The Legend of Bagger Vance." Like most of his directorial forays, it's about people who have to struggle against great odds to come into their own.

This time around, the protagonist is a champion golfer (**Matt Damon**) who loses his exceptional ability, but eventually regains it with the help of a spirit guide (**Will Smith**). The film's female lead is **Charlize Theron**.

Quote, unquote

JOSH **Billings**: Life consists not in holding good cards but in playing those you hold well.

Oscar Wilde: The world is divided into two classes: those who believe the incredible, and those who do the improbable.

John Burroughs: For anything worth having, one must pay the price—and the price is always work, patience, love and self-sacrifice.

Geneva holds provincial shows

AFTER her jampacked concert at the Glorietta Park on Dec. 29 and the well-received New Year's Eve countdown treat at Discovery Suites, Geneva Cruz starts off the new year with special concerts, "Northern Exposure," at Tabuk, Kalinga Apayao on Jan. 5 and at the People's Gym in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan on Jan. 6. Produced by Capt. Conrad T. Dieza Jr. and Engr. Samuel B. Bayangan, the show is a benefit for the Dur-As Kalinga Foundation which has been spearheading medical missions, scholarship grants and community development projects in the region.

CRUZ

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GUNBLUSTER XTO
HURRICANE SONIC
NEO TRIDAGGER ZMC
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1	2	3
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THE 6TH DAYS 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50	MEET THE PARENTS 12:50, 3:20, 5:50, 8:20	MEET THE PARENTS 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

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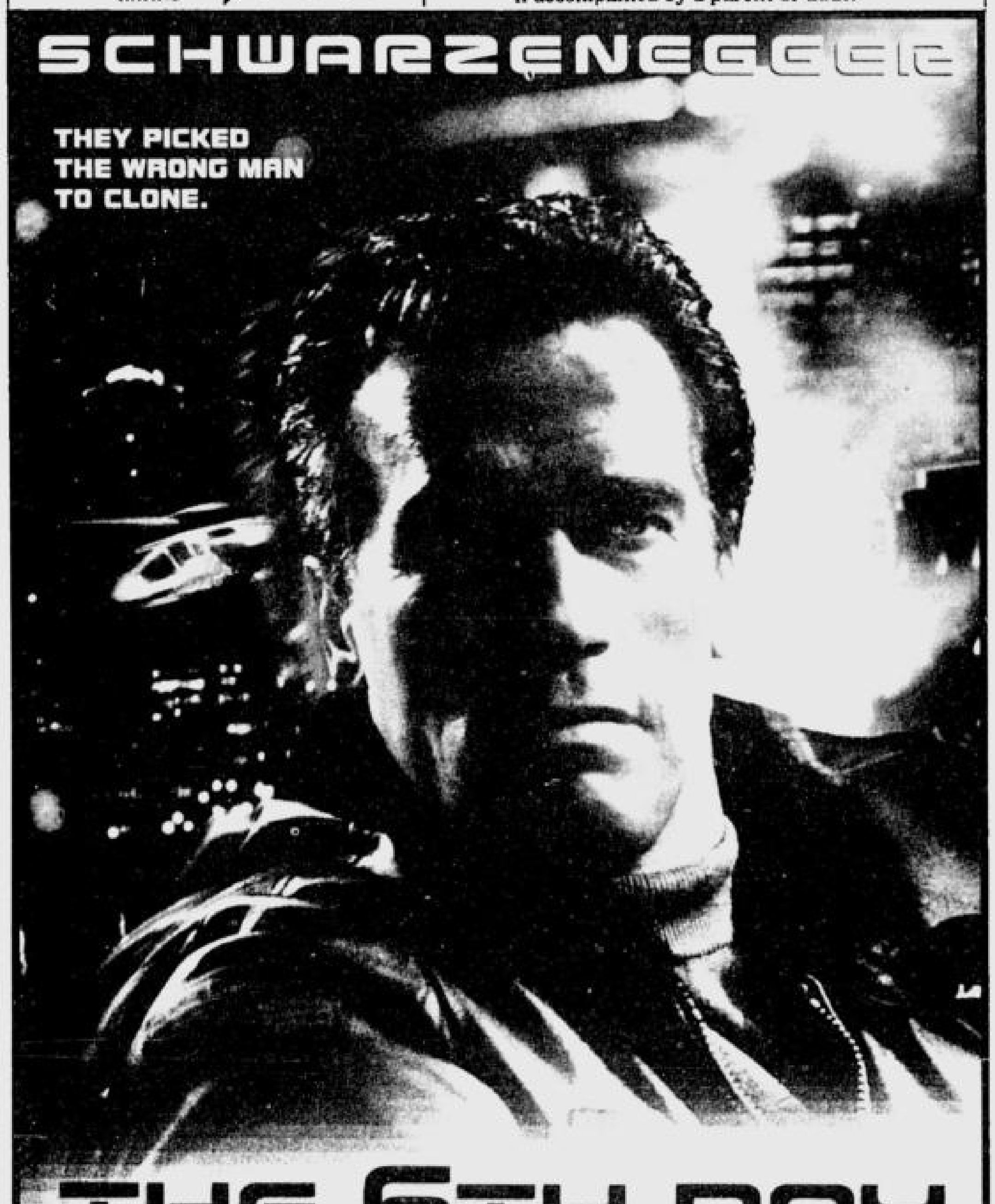

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THE LAST MOVIES OF 2000

From the ridiculous to the sublime

BY GINO DORMIENDO

NO doubt this year's Metro Manila Film Festival represents a marked improvement over the pitifully lackluster harvest of the previous years. But to claim that this is the best batch of films in many years is totally untrue.

We are old enough to recall the glorious year of 1976, which presaged the second golden age of Philippine cinema and which produce three outstanding films, two of which have become classics—Eddie Romero's "Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon" and Lino Brocka's "Insiang."

The third, Lupita Kashiwahara's "Minsa'y Isang Gamu-gamo," is still noteworthy for its courageous stand against American colonialism.

Even 1977 had minor gems like Celso Ad. Castillo's "Burlesk Queen," Romy Suzara's "Bilanggong Birhen," Mike de Leon's "Kung Mangarap Ka't Magising" and Brocka's "Inay."

The mere presence of the more noteworthy directors like Laurice Guillen, or of such old reliables as Joel Lamangan, Jose Javier Reyes, Gil Portes and Chito Roño is no guarantee of genuine quality since these directors have to be, ultimately, judged by their finished works. Given the outwardly commercial slant of the MMFF and of the industry in general, everyone becomes suspect in more ways than one.

As it is, what we have seen thus far in this year's MMFF is quite a disparate bunch of oddities, failed attempts and one incontestably laudable film that aspires to the heavens and, perhaps with divine intervention, acquits itself honorably well.

There's "Markova: Comfort Gay," purportedly inspired by the real-life experiences of a cross-dressing gay named Walter Dempster Jr. (played by Dolphy and his sons Jeffrey and Eric Quizon in the various stages of his life story) who had openly claimed he became a comfort gay during the early years of the Japanese occupation. His fantastical tale was soon picked up by the media and, for all its worth, later peddled by its director, Gil Portes, as the very subject of his new film.

Who would dare raise questions about Dempster's alleged harrowing experience in the hands of his captors more than 50 years ago? But, unlike the well-publicized ordeals of the well-known comfort women like Rosa Henson which were documented, presented and defended before international bodies, this one may ultimately prove to be a hoax.

Shadowy past

What Portes and his scenarist, Clodualdo del Mundo Jr., have concocted is an expanded biopic that makes use of an unsavory mix of reenactments, a string of dream sequences staged in the magic realist mode, and a slew of interminable production numbers as Markova's character shuttles between his shadowy past and the grim present. And when the film finally ends, all we see is an extended *bodabil* number, with the three Quizons reunited in a mock dance sequence that lays to waste the film's much-vaunted aspirations.

I feel sorry for this mess. I feel betrayed by a film that merely trivializes the issues of comfort women, reduces the real horrors of the war, and, in sublimation, makes a pitch for gender tolerance—all in the name of dishing out this bastardized tale of pseudo-gay liberation. While I am for the populist espousal of gender rights, especially for the liberation of the marginalized gay sector, we must not be remiss in our effort to portray the truth, or what it deems to approximate in this film.

Portes, given the overwhelming quantity of his work in recent years, is a filmmaker who barely catches the surface of things, contemporary issues and concerns. He has tackled a transsexual character in "Miguel, Michelle," which he dished out in his usual melodramatic manner, thereby losing the contemporaneous bite so essential to his film.

Last year, he did "Saranggola," a movie inspired by the documented murder of an innocent, kite-flying child by a gun-toting cop. Again, he failed to link this senseless act with the larger issues of environmental degradation, police corruption and the breakdown of law and order in this country.

Portes' "Markova," with ample logistics from Dolphy's own production outfit, does not amount to anything much at the end. Dolphy's character, for one, is a rehash of his erstwhile drag shows in "Facifica Falayfay," with bits and pieces of TV sitcom to spice it up, though his sons make a more valiant effort to delineate their characters.

Nonetheless the real Markova's tale is far from inspiring or amusing. As a beneficiary of Pasay Councilor Justo Justo's political kitty, Dempster admitted that he merely received a token of the fee paid for the right to film his story, with most of the money ending up with his benefactor.

The comfort gay angle, moreover, induces greater discomfort since we know fully well that Dempster has been exploited several times over, the audience has been taken for a ride and the movie is virtually an extended mock-up drag show with nothing to feed the imagination or assuage the wounded psyche.

Tepid and discomforting

GMA Films' "Deathrow" is a prison movie that claims to delve into the lives of inmates awaiting their doomsday. Well and good if the original premise is matched with concrete or tangible effort. But under Joel Lamangan's belabored direction, the movie comes off rather tepid and discomfiting. The film's milieu resembles, or at least approximates, that of a dingy, congested jail and its denizens are perpetually engaged in the acrimonious activities of typical city-jail inmates.

At some point, in fact, the movie begins to look like an updated all-male version of Mario O' Hara's "Bulaklak ng City Jail," a far more provocative and successfully evocative work in the same genre.

Lamangan's movie concerns a young slum dweller (Cogie Domingo) who has been arrested, tried and wrongly convicted for the murder of a holdup victim. Though only 16 at the time of the crime (which would have qualified him as a juvenile offender), he is speedily sent to the gallows for the reason that he passed himself off as 18 in his voter's ID as a flying voter in his barangay.

Once on death row, Domingo is predictably subjected to far worse crimes inflicted by his fellow inmates, ranging from torture to sodomy. An old inmate (Eddie Garcia), who has been in prison for 35 long years, befriends him and tries to save him from more brutalities. He is also aided by a volunteer lawyer (Jaclyn Jose) who digs up his case and, at the appropriate time, comes up with a new witness that saves the boy from a premature death.

Characters' gallery

Lamangan invests his movie with a gallery of characters many of whom are stock, and all of whom predictably fall prey to the script's pre-ordained design (credited, rather debited, to Ricardo Lee and his current protégé Manny Palo). Pretty much of the characterization is either old-hat, hackneyed or unoriginal (I can cite those of "Bulaklak ng City Jail" among its homegrown origins and "The Green Mile" as its foreign source, with some localized variations, of course).

There, too, is Lamangan's permanent actor-protégé doing a Markova bit with his usual fanning, the only person, by the way, who feels the heat in the entire prison.

What takes the cake is the casting of Domingo, a teenybopper whose looks and demeanor have clearly come straight out of Millionaires' Row, and on whose frail shoulders rests the movie's shaky premise.

A glaring legal booboo soon manifests itself: If indeed the boy was 16 at the time of the commission of the crime but all records otherwise prove him to be 18, a legal age that qualifies him for the death sentence, couldn't his volunteer lawyer contact his last remaining relative in the slums where he hails from who could have provided an affidavit to the contrary?

Victim of injustice

The movie is, moreover, fatally flawed by the weak structuring of the flashbacks on the part of Garcia's character, here shown as another victim of injustice. Staged in agonizingly detailed fashion, these scenes do not look logical nor in any way dramatic, and all the more call attention to the grave lapses already discussed.

LAMANGAN

PORTES

I would also imagine that this inmate would have been released during the Aquino administration when the death penalty was scrapped momentarily.

The performances by the ensemble of veteran actors are conjured to provide teeth-gnashing moments, particularly Domingo's whose own mode of acting betrays his dental and juvenile inadequacies.

Eddie Garcia is suited for the role of *Lolo* Sinat. Jose is at least able to subvert her share of neuroses (a Lee trademark) and make them look effectively affecting.

Still, "Deathrow" is saddled with countless other psychoses, mostly emanating from a slipshod scenario, and not all the hyping up of its technical brio can compensate for the fatal or, more correctly, lethal lapse into filmic thrombosis.

Well-wrought scenario

Which brings us now to the third entry, "Tanging Yaman," adjudged by the jury as the best of the lot, which if you ask me is not a lot either.

The movie, despite initial reservations about its being a blatantly religious movie worthy of the Jubilee Year, simply succeeds where others fail. It has a well-wrought scenario about a family—a widowed mother and her three grown-up children, as well as their own families—loving, hating and suffering spread out across an interminable season of confronting their past sins and recriminations, their interlocking fates and the apologies that follow.

The son (Johnny Delgado), who has stuck it out with his widowed mother (Gloria Romero), wife and kids in this aging mansion surrounded by a vista of lahar, plays the aggrieved party. His more fortunate siblings (the successful brother is played by Edu Manzano and the US-based sister by Dina Bonnevie) have wandered off to pursue their own lives in the Big City.

All three children must now confront the specter of the past when they finally decide to dispose of their inheritance, a large parcel of land that their mother must bequeath to them. Her unlucky son has received a pittance, having claimed and absconded his rightful share early in his youth.

The clan's reunion becomes all the more agonizing as the aged mother begins to suffer from Alzheimer's disease, a debilitating affliction that results in the breakdown of memory and the loss of mental and physical faculties.

Though one can take issue with the movie's overtly religious slant, complete with the Jubilee soundtrack (Guillen has for years been a Marian devotee and preacher, which made her leave her flourishing career seven years ago), "Tanging Yaman" nonetheless makes for engrossing, emotionally gripping viewing.

Guillen, who co-wrote the script with Raymond Lee and Shaira Salvador, knows the movie's milieu- personal, familial, social—inside out. She has orchestrated her movie with such remarkable fluidity that has been her hallmark since "Salome" and even with such *komiks*-based projects as "Kung Mahawi Man ang Ulap." She invests her characters with the essential layers of feelings and emotions, laying bare the seeds of their humanity. She stages scenes with masterful precision, aided considerably by Lee Meily's efficient camerawork and the distinguished acting.

Luminous

The performances, in fact, are uniformly outstanding. Delgado (who deservedly won the MMFF Best Actor prize) is perfectly sympathetic as Danilo, and his obese body makes him all the more vulnerable in an ironic way.

Manzano, as the hateful but remorseful Art, is likewise thoroughly believable and so is Bonnevie. The actors who play their spouses are equally superb, particularly Hilda Koronel, who has never been this good in a long time.

Among the younger actors who delineate the roles of their children, Jericho Rosales is the most accomplished of all, although his potentials have not surfaced in countless youth movies and *telesines*.

Most of all, it is Gloria Romero who shines most luminously, an actress who must have invoked the heavens in living up to the challenge of a lifetime.

By aspiring to create such lofty movies like "Tanging Yaman," the moribund Philippine cinema can merit a new lease on life.

BACKSTREET BOYS 'BLACK AND BLUE'

The world's biggest selling band recently released their latest album, "Black and Blue," by visiting six continents in four days – from Stockholm to Tokyo, Sydney to Capetown and Rio de Janeiro and ending in New York City. Their new hit single from the album, "Shape of My Heart," is already a global hit. Universal Records is releasing the album in the Philippines.

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Business sees bleakest time in a decade

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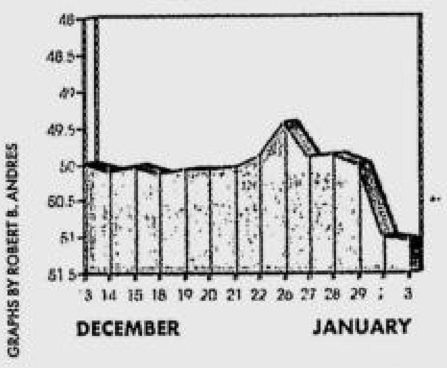

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As of 5 p.m., Jan. 3, 2001

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The US dollar was trading at 114.90 as of 5 p.m., Dec. 29, 2000

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per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 3, 2001

STOCK MARKET

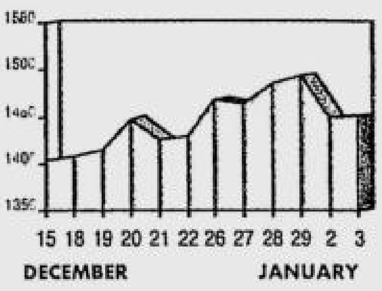
Stocks up

SHARES closed a shade higher yesterday with last-minute bargain hunting by some foreign houses reversing a downtrend triggered mainly by uncertainties related to President Estrada's impeachment trial.

The 33-share composite index inched up 2.47 points, or 0.17 percent, to end at 1,450.96 points in a mixed session that saw 23 gainers and 22 losers.

However, the liquidity in the market was down to a historic low, reflecting

STOCKS/ B2



(See stock market report on Page B2)

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE FEDERATION of Philippine Industries yesterday painted a bleaker economic outlook for the first quarter this year as the Dec. 30 bombings in Metro Manila further spooked local and foreign investors while factories are forced to cut back production and retrench workers.

FPI chair Raul T. Concepcion said he expected gross domestic product to grow by 1.5 percent in the first quarter this year, down sharply from his original forecast of 2 percent to 2.5 percent which he made barely a week ago.

Concepcion said the "highly synchronized" bombings in Metro Manila has shored up selling pressure to the peso since Tuesday, which further compounded uncertainties over the lingering political crisis.

He said businessmen feared that the peso (which fell to a record low of 52 to the dollar Tuesday) could plunge to the 53 to 54 mark which could force many companies to shut down operations rather than incurring more losses by continuing their operations.

With consumer demand so weak and manufacturing costs so high, the country may experience the worst round of layoffs and shortened work hours in almost a decade.

But Concepcion said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura (in a casual meeting during the weekend) assured businessmen that the BSP was ready to defend the peso at 53 to 54 to the dollar.

Concepcion said Buenaventura reckoned that selling at this level was merely a knee-jerk reaction to the bombings which the BSP chief believes should stabilize as soon as the panic subsides.

Concepcion said the bombings have become another excuse for local and foreign businessmen to hold back their investments. He said businessmen were uncertain over the outcome of the impeachment trial, specifically the acceptance by the people of the Senate's verdict, and the results of the May 2001 elections.

Even without the pre-New Year bombings, Concepcion said certain automotive, appliance and food manufacturers were already planning to reduce their work schedule to three to four day a week starting this month as consumer spending further slows down in the traditionally lean first quarter period. The days off will be charged to the workers' leave credits.

Concepcion said there would be lesser workdays and roughly 100,000 workers could be rendered jobless over the next three months with casual employees getting the brunt of the layoffs. "I don't know where the 850,000 new graduates this year will get their jobs," Concepcion said.

Manufacturers have yet to recover the average 18-percent increase in production costs (which they have not been able to pass on to consumers for fear of driving down demand further).

Equitable not seeking gov't assistance

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday Equitable PCIBank had not asked for government assistance despite reports that the bank had experienced heavy withdrawals.

Buenaventura said the bank—caught in the middle of President Estrada's corruption trial—continued to operate normally and was not seeking government assistance.

"The bank had admitted to some withdrawals, but it continues to operate normally. They have not come to us for any liquidity assistance," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said.

Equitable PCI, the country's No. 3 lender, said it experienced "some withdrawals" in previous weeks, but it has already recovered all the money withdrawn during this period.

Buenaventura confirmed that the BSP had been requested to provide liquidity assistance to banks, including Equitable PCI, if asked.

He said the request from Malacañang was conveyed by Finance Secretary Jose Pardo.

He said the BSP was ready to help any bank applying for emergency loans so long as it qualified under existing regulations.

He added, however, there had been no specific government request to help Equitable PCI and the bank itself had not approached the BSP.

Equitable PCI declined to comment on the matter.

Equitable PCIBank officials have been giving testimony in the impeachment trial of Mr. Estrada related to an account allegedly held under a bogus name by the former movie star.

Equitable PCI senior vice president Clarissa Ocampo testified on Tuesday that former bank chair George Go ordered her to prepare documents to transfer the account to Estrada ally Jaime Dichaves after the Senate subpoenaed the bank records.

Ocampo earlier testified that she personally saw Mr. Estrada open the account under the alias "Jose Velarde" last February.

The prosecution alleges that Mr. Estrada used secret bank accounts under the "Velarde" name to hide millions of dollars of illegal gambling payoffs and tax kickbacks.

Dichaves claimed ownership of the Velarde account a week after the alleged attempt to switch the documents, strengthening earlier suspicions by the prosecution that the president's allies may have already have tampered with evidence in an effort to protect Mr. Estrada.

The prosecution is attempting to show that Mr. Estrada stashed millions of pesos in secret accounts, lying on his 1999 income disclosure statement when he said he was worth only P35 million.

With a report from Bloomberg

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Year of the sneak

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

IT'S the year of the snake, this 2001, and not year of the sneaky! Our dearly beloved oil companies, particularly the so-called Big Three, probably had it wrong. At the start of a new year, you see, the Big Three, which are Petron, Caltex and Shell, sent us some little late holiday greetings. They said they intended to cut prices. Why, thank you, bossing!

In keeping with the Yuletide spirit, the Big Three were so moved by the joy of the season they simply must say those few important words to the public. So all right, they are thinking of reducing their prices possibly somewhere in the future within our lifetime. Never mind that we could have used the break during the holidays.

Then again, pardon my asking, but what's the catch? It turned out that the price cuts, which the Big Three announced individually and not as one single colluding entity, would still depend on several factors. Like all the "factors" in any BS, those cited by the Big Three are way into the bleak future. Sneaky bastards.

Rule No. 1 in factor presentation says that the "factors" have yet to happen. Thus, they are always beyond your control. No wonder, as I write this, the Big Three's "promise" remains a promise. They are waiting for more news from Opec. The news will come in three more weeks yet. Meantime, we make do with their promise.

* * *

SO HOW come they announced the price cut *olredi, may gulay naman, oo?* To me then, the announcement was made just to please an angry mob. Everybody was asking why fuel prices did not go down. World prices of crude oil already shrunk. Compared with the price in 1999, oil prices by the end of 2000 were roughly one-third lower.

In other words, there was public clamor for cuts in fuel prices. Big cuts! Why was the public clamoring? Because the public pays for fuel out of their own hard-earned money, that's why! Look, not everybody has a secret bank account in Equitable PCIBank under a fictitious name. That's why, to the public, the price of fuel is a big deal.

It's such a big deal. In fact, that in surveys after surveys last year, respondents blamed the huge increases in fuel prices on the man named Band . . . Wrist Band. Admittedly, the man should account for a huge portion of the world's total fuel demand, which is one, er, "factor" in rising prices, him being a multi-family man and all that.

But for heaven's sake, Bojek, something was, is and will be definitely wrong in this country if the government could not even direct public anger over fuel prices to Opec, which richly deserves it. Thanks to Opec, even our beloved oil companies are careful in cutting prices even if it's something they should have done months ago.

* * *

ONE clear sign that times are hard comes from the Government Service Insurance System. Word from Federico Pascual, GSIS president and general manager, is that the system released some P11 billion in quick loans to members in just two months. The releases were made in October and November before the Yuletide season.

Under Pascual, you see, the GSIS has been trying to raise the ceiling on the most popular type of loan among its members: the one called salary loan. It's not true that the loan is called such because the borrower tries to get somebody else's salary. No, far from it!

The loan is simply based on the borrower's capacity to pay, which to us down here is always the salary. For instance, my father, who used to be a policeman, often availed himself of GSIS salary loans in times of great emergency such as school opening time. He had to put nine kids to school. At that time, with the poor pay of policemen and the low ceiling on GSIS "salary loans," he could raise enough funds to buy a few used notebooks.

The ceiling on GSIS salary loans used to be the equivalent of three months of pay. In August 1999, Pascual raised it to the equivalent of five months and, last October, the members asked for the maximum eight.

* * *

ACCORDING to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura, who probably got it from somewhere else, the Philippines is now ranked as the third-largest money-laundering center in the world.

So how could anybody know how much funds actually are being laundered here when the law says that bank deposits and such are supposed to be confidential? For that matter, how do you rank countries according to the amount of money which are laundered there? By guessing, I guess.

Now, I heard that many of the withdrawals from Equitable PCIBank were made by Binondo businessmen in the aftermath of the Jose Velarde case. Those are the guys who wear sleepers and tank-tops going to work and, in the afternoon, to the bank and deposit a couple of hundreds of millions of pesos. Yes, they are the poor multimillionaires of Binondo!

To solve the problem of money laundering, it's true we have to amend the bank secrecy law. Some accounts cannot be kept confidential! But where do you draw the line? How do you prevent abuse? And how do you assure those Binondo boys that everything is all right?

Market sees inflation to hit 7%

BY DORIS C. DUMLAO

THE COUNTRY'S inflation rate is expected to have risen slightly to 6.3 percent in December after hitting a 16-month high of 6 percent in November.

Market analysts polled by the INQUIRER said inflation rate could even go up to an average of 7 percent this year due to certain negative developments such as the President's impeachment trial, the sharp peso depreciation and higher interest rates.

The 7-percent projection, however, was well within the government's inflation rate projection for the year of between 6.5 percent and 7.5 percent.

Socioeconomic planning chief Felipe Medalla said earlier that the government revised the inflation rate target this year from 5.5 to 6.5 percent to between 6.5 and 7.5 percent owing to the expected increase in food prices to be brought about by the recurrence of the El Niño weather phenomenon.

The increase, however, could be tempered by the fall in oil prices this year to an average of $24 per barrel from $27 last year and a stable foreign exchange at P47 to P49 to a dollar.

For December, only one of the five brokerage houses polled by the INQUIRER predicted that inflation rate would be lower than the November level. Others predicted an inflation rate ranging from a low of 5.4 percent to a high of 7 percent.

ATR Kim Eng Securities research head Luz Lorenzo, who projected a lower inflation compared to November, noted that the uptick in December was only due to extraordinary factors brought about by typhoons Senyang and Reming.

"If you take out that effect, it should be lower in December," Lorenzo said.

Manny Cruz, research head of Mark Securities, on the other hand, projected a high inflation rate of 7 percent in December due to climbing commodity prices and higher prices of petroleum products.

GK Goh Securities head of research Ivy Cayayan agreed that the inflation rate last month was "definitely higher than November" which she also attributed to higher oil prices and increased consumer spending due to the Christmas holidays

For 2001, PCCI Securities Broker Corp. Gonzalo Bongolan said the government's target of 6.5 to 7.5 percent would be easily attained.

"There's no problem with the growth of the agricultural sector. The economy is seen to post lower growth, which means no demand pull and a lot of unemployment also tended to depress demand," he added.

Worldsec International Securities head of research Eric Claudio agreed that the inflation rate this year was not likely to break out of the government's target range. He said the rate could even hit the low end of 6.5 percent.

"We expect the agricultural output to be normal. Crude prices are likewise normalizing given the fact that US economy is slower than expected. At the same time, growth in the Asian region hasn't been that big so pressure on oil prices is downward rather than upward," Claudio said.

"What would disrupt this inflation scenario, however, is supply bottlenecks but we're not expecting much of these assuming that the ongoing impeachment trial will not affect decision of firms' to raise prices," he said.

DISCLOSURES

THE LISTING of some 47,738,000 common shares of **Union Cement Corp.** is set for Jan. 5. This will bring to 87,479,996 the total number of listed UCC common shares.

* * *

JOSEPH Chua has been named the new chief operating officer of **MacroAsia Corp.** Former COO Wee Ah Kee will remain as one of the members of the company's board.

* * *

ALASKA Milk Corp. bought 19,000 AMC shares at P1.90 on Dec. 28, 2000 under its stock buy back program.

* * *

EASYCALL Communications Phils. Inc. approved the increase of its authorized stock from P100 million to P200 million.

* * *

ASTRA Zeneca Plc's agrochemicals business was merged with **Novartis'** crop protection and seeds business to form **Syngenta AG.** With the merger, the Zeneca range of agricultural chemical products currently distributed by **Jardine Davis Inc.** will be transferred to Syngenta starting April 1.

* * *

REPUBLIC Cement Corp.'s participation in the tender offer of Picop **Holdings Inc.** resulted in a change in the control of **Zeus Holdings Inc.** Picop is now the beneficial owner of a total of 2,686,073,694 shares in Zeus, which represent about 98.27 percent of the total outstanding capital stock of Zeus. ***Compiled by Armin P. Adina, PDI Research***

Stocks . . .

(From page B1)

further drop in the market's confidence level amid the jitters caused by the bombings last Saturday and the impeachment trial.

Value turnover in the Philippine Stock Exchange thinned out to an all-time low of P215.94 million amid a meager 139 million exchange of shares.

Excluding some P64 million worth of cross sales involving foreign insurance firms Manulife Financial Corp. and Sun Life Financial Services of Canada Inc., trading value yesterday would have even stood lower at only P151.94 million.

"It's so unfortunate. The local stock market is withering. Real and perceived risks attached to equities trading have just gone so high to the point of neglecting many issues that remain fundamentally sound," PCCI Securities Brokers Corp. head of research Gonzalo Bongolan said.

Bongolan noted that value turnover in the stock market has never fallen below P200 million before.

The deterioration of the volume turnout overshadowed the slight gain posted by the main-share PSE composite index.

Securities Specialist president Francisco Villaroman predicted that there would be a "dead cat bounce" yesterday. But he noted that the Phisix would still likely fall to 1,420 and further down to 1,375 within the month.

Ecozone investments doubled last year to ₱74B

BY GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.

THE PHILIPPINE Economic Zone Authority reported yesterday that investments in new and expansion projects in private and state-owned economic zones doubled last year despite waning investor confidence in the Estrada administration.

Peza reported that total investments zoomed 101 percent to P74.056 billion last year from P36.819 billion in 1999.

Peza's registered investments are nearly double the projects that signed up with the Board of Investments last year making it the main investment magnet of the government. This is understandable considering that Peza offers a more incentives package (like tax and duty-free perks on imports) than the BOI whose best come-on is a 4- to 6-year income tax break.

BOI investments are expected to plunge to a 12-year low of P40 billion to P45 billion which acting Trade and Industry Secretary Thomas G. Aquino said reflected the weak investor sentiment on the economy.

Existing businesses in ecozones poured in P40.393 billion in new capital to expand their operations last year, up by 63 percent from P24.822 billion in 1999.

Most of these companies are in the electronics and semiconductors assembly businesses that should ensure the continued growth of the country's biggest dollar earner in the near-to-medium term.

A total of 107 expansion projects were registered last year which the Peza said would generate $2.38 million in annual foreign exchange earnings and 25,727 new jobs.

Peza reported that investments by new businesses in ecozones surged by 217 percent to P24.939 billion in 2000 from P7.875 billion in 1999. There were 93 companies that registered with the Peza last year that should generate $842.225 million in 2000 and 28,055 new jobs.

Investments in new information technology projects swelled by 1,271 percent to P1.208 billion in 2000 from P88.084 million in 1999. The 11 projects listed under this sector are expected to generate $75 million in annual foreign exchange earnings and 3,572 new jobs.

With the strong demand for ecozone space, Peza reported that 13 new ecozones and 12 expansion projects for existing ecozones were registered with total investments of P4.3 billion in 2000, up by 11.4 percent from P3.863 billion in 1999.

Gov't pushing for PNB revamp

BY CLARISSA S. BATINO

THE GOVERNMENT plans to reorganize the board of Philippine National Bank as part of the ailing lender's pending rehabilitation program with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Finance Secretary Jose T. Pardo said the government wanted to reconstitute the board even if it owned only 16 percent of the country's fifth-largest bank in terms of assets.

"We believe that we might as well reorganize the board if we wanted PNB to streamline management," Pardo said.

The government's representation in the PNB board went down to two board seats when the state's ownership was diluted from 30.4 percent last October, giving way to tobacco and beer magnate Lucio Tan.

Tan now owns 70 percent of the bank.

PNB has been incurring losses since 1998 due mainly to the increase in the bank's bad loans ratio. The bank's bad loans accounted for as much as 38 percent of total loan portfolio as of the third quarter last year.

These past due loans included a P5.6-billion loan to National Steel Corp., P3 billion to the Ramon Jacinto Group and a P2.26 billion loan to the Guoco Group.

The BSP and PNB have not yet agreed on the rehabilitation plan due to pending issues including the coversion of a short-term emergency loan facility, the reorganization of management, reduction of non-performing loans, sale of foreclosed assets, tightening of credit policies and rationalizing of operations.

The government was currently represented in the PNB board by PNB chair Andres Narvasa, PNB President Feliciano Miranda Jr., Nieves Confesor, Cielo Macapagal-Salgado, and Roberto Marquez.

Tan, on the other hand, was on the board along with associates Enrique Filamor, Macario Te, and Florencio Santos.

Respected businessman Washington Sycip represented the 7 percent of the public shareholders while Hong Kong fund manager Templeton Assets Management Inc. elected Roberto Romulo as its representative in the board.

Out of PNB board were former PNB president Benjamin Palma-Gil and director Gregorio Santayana.

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Wednesday, January 3, 2001)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.50	7.5	7.5	7.5	2,000
Banco Filipino Sav & Mort	90.00	90	90	90	100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	56.50	58	56.5	58	268,700
China Banking Corp.	720.0	750	720	750	14,420
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	55.00	55.5	55	55	8,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	181.0	184	180	184	116,980
Philippine National Bank	36.00	37.5	36	37.5	1,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	28.00	31	28	30.5	117,200
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Manulife Financial Corp.	1530	1530	1500	1515	2,660
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1300	1315	1300	1315	14,640
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	48.50	49.5	48.5	49.5	134,500
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	.4400	.46	.44	.44	330,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	660.0	660	660	660	1,200
Piltel	.5600	.56	.56	.56	100,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	860.0	860	850	855	27,880
Ivantage Corp.	.8800	.88	.86	.86	460,000
Philweb.com Inc.	.0380	.039	.037	.039	29,300,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. "A"	45.00	45	45	45	118,900
Manila Electric Co. "B"	46.50	47.5	46.5	46.5	122,800
Petron Corp.	1.18	1.2	1.18	1.18	571,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1,000
Int'l Container Term'l SV	.7500	.75	.73	.73	1,050,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	.3600	.36	.36	.36	80,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Jollibee Foods Corp.	9.70	9.7	9.7	9.7	10,000
Pancake House Inc.	1.58	1.58	1.56	1.56	64,000
RFM Corp.	1.00	1	1	1	10,000
San Miguel Corp. "A"	47.50	48.5	47.5	48.5	82,000
San Miguel Corp. "B"	53.50	54.5	53.5	54.5	113,600
Phil Tob Flue Cur & Redry	10.50	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	7.10	7.3	7.1	7.2	558,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	1.30	1.3	1.3	1.3	905,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	12.75	13	12	12.25	2,000
APC Group Inc.	.1600	.16	.16	.16	2,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	2.10	2.1	2.1	2.1	50,000
Bacnotan Cons. Indus. Inc.	13.50	13.5	13.5	13.5	1,500
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.80	2.8	2.8	2.8	290,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	.1500	.15	.15	.15	200,000
Southeast Asian Cement	.2000	.2	.2	.2	60,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	.2700	.27	.27	.27	80,000
First Phil. Hldgs. Corp.	20.50	20.5	20.5	20.5	14,500
Global Equities Inc.	.3500	.35	.35	.35	10,000
Ionics Inc.	14.50	14.5	14.5	14.5	835,000
Ipeople Inc.	.8200	.82	.82	.82	80,000
Ipeople Inc. "B"	.7100	1.12	.71	1.12	59,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	2.04	2.04	2.04	2.04	20,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	4,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. "A"	.0110	.016	.011	.016	1,800,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	.5600	.58	.56	.57	2,380,000
Solid Group Inc.	.5000	.5	.47	.47	500,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	.4900	.51	.49	.51	2,290,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	.3700	.37	.37	.37	400,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	.7200	.72	.72	.72	20,000
Macondray Plastics Inc.	6.30	6.3	6.3	6.3	3,000
Music Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.8	2.9	28,000
Picop Resources Inc.	.1100	.11	.11	.11	100,000
Philippine Seven Corp.	6.80	6.8	6.8	6.8	2,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	7.60	7.6	7.5	7.5	120,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	.7500	.79	.75	.79	1,300,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	.3900	.39	.39	.39	890,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	48.00	48.5	48	48.5	107,700
Equitable PCI Bank-War	2.90	2.95	2.9	2.9	147,000
Omico Corp. Warrant	.0026	.0026	.0026	.0026	55,000,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.50	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,900
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.10	5.4	5.1	5.4	6,508,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	.3000	.3	.3	.3	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	.2900	.29	.29	.29	2,130,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.30	1.3	1.28	1.3	685,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	.3000	.3	.3	.3	200,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	5.40	5.6	5.4	5.4	3,287,000
Urbancorp Realty Dev. Inc.	.2500	.25	.25	.25	20,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. "A"	.0050	.005	.005	.005	5,000,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. "A"	.1800	.19	.18	.19	30,000
Manila Mining Corp. "B"	.0060	.006	.0055	.0055	7,000,000
Omico Corp.	.0036	.0036	.0036	.0036	8,000,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. "B"	.0042	.0042	.0042	.0042	1,000,000
Pacifica	.0150	.015	.015	.015	1,000,000
Vulcan Ind'l.	.1900	.19	.19	.19	130,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	546,000	74,835,140.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	102,840,280	86,171,680.00
PRO	13,030,000	54,572,740.00
Mining	20,030,000	98,400.00
OIL	2,130,000	43,900.00
GRAND TOTALS:	138,576,280	215,721,860.00

	AVERAGES	
Banks & Fin Svc	543.32	UP13.18
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,041.96	DOWN 4.62
PRO	490.26	UP4.69
Mining	1,216.48	DOWN 4.46
OIL	1.71	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	821.88	DOWN 8.51
Composite	1,450.96	UP2.47

NO. OF ADVANCES: 23; NO. OF DECLINES: 22; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 34; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 79; NO. OF TRADES: 1,189

CURRENCIES

Jan. 3, 2001

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.052299	1.000000	51.2940
Japan	Yen	0.009192	0.008735	0.4481
United Kingdom	Pound	1.579817	1.501300	77.0077
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.134917	0.128212	6.5765
Switzerland	Franc	0.657441	0.624766	32.0467
Canada	Dollar	0.704728	0.669703	34.3517
Singapore	Dollar	0.607388	0.577201	29.6069
Australia	Dollar	0.587614	0.558410	28.6431
Bahrain	Dinar	2.791393	2.652661	136.0656
Kuwait	Dinar	N/A	N/A	N/A
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.280621	0.266674	13.6788
Brunei	Dollar	0.605466	0.575374	29.5132
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000112	0.000106	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.024055	0.022859	1.1725
UAE	Dirham	0.286535	0.272294	13.9670
Korea	Won	0.000826	0.000785	0.0403
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.950300	48.7447
Germany	Deutsch	0.511292	0.485881	24.9228
France	Franc	0.152450	0.144872	7.4311
Netherlands	Guilder	0.453780	0.431227	22.1194
Austria	Schilling	0.072673	0.069061	3.5424
Belgium	Franc	0.024789	0.023557	1.2083
Italy	Lire	0.000517	0.000491	0.0252
Finland	Markka	0.168188	0.159829	8.1983
Portugal	Escudo	0.004988	0.00474	0.2431
Spain	Peseta	0.006010	0.005711	0.2929
Luxemburg	Franc	0.024789	0.023557	1.2083
Ireland	Punt	1.269738	1.206632	61.8930

MOTORING

CESAR D. MANGAWANG, Editor

The future of automotive safety

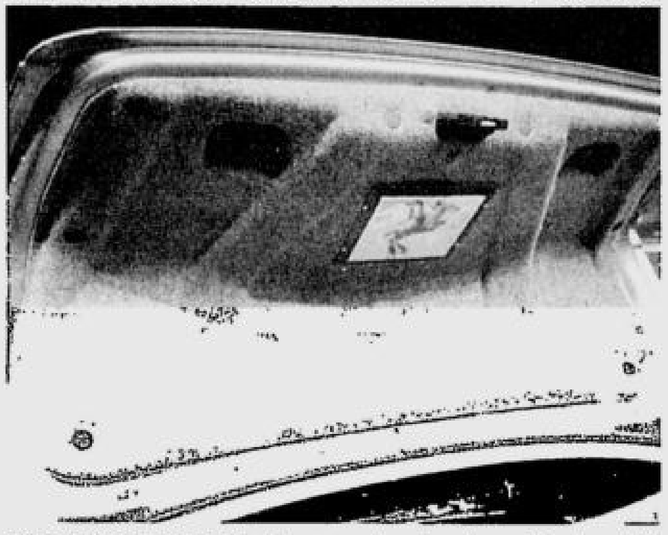
**TEXT AND PHOTOS
BY VERNON B. SARNE**

SINCE it's the first week of the year, let's talk about the future. To be specific, let's talk about the future of car safety. Imagine an era where auto safety technology is so sophisticated that zero casualty is almost always guaranteed during vehicular mishaps—the accidental kind, not those perpetrated by hoodlums in uniform.

Airbags. Antilock brakes. Seatbelts. Side-impact beams. Crumple zones. These are just some of the most impressive products of automotive safety engineering that were considered trailblazing in the past but are now taken for granted. Advances in car safety have been so swift that, in the next couple of years, automakers will probably not be able to amuse their customers unless the vehicle itself can administer first aid treatment.

Our recent visit of Ford Motor Co.'s Research and Development Center in Detroit gave us a curious peek into the crystal ball of automotive safety. Helen Petrauskas, Ford's vice president for environmental and safety engineering, showed us five cars that boasted the collective efforts of various brands under the Ford Group. It was part of the company's "Cleaner, Safer, Sooner" program. The fact that they allowed us to take pictures of these technologies—not to mention that most of them already functioned—only means we may see some of them on production cars in the very near future.

THE EYECAR gives any driver perfect view of the road.



THE SECURECAR features a touchpad on the trunklid for trapped kids.

THE CAMCAR has a watchful eye on its side mirrors

EyeCar

Taking center stage in the exhibit was Volvo Car Corp.'s EyeCar. It should be safe to presume that Ford has been taking full advantage of its tie-up with Volvo by way of sharing notes in the field of car safety. Volvo is widely acknowledged as the assembler of the world's safest cars. For this program, Volvo contributed the EyeCar, a vehicle that assures any driver—regardless of his or her height—perfect view of the road. Volvo did the trick by placing the eyes of any driver at the same level within the cockpit. Using eye-position sensors, the car detects the "unique reflectivity" of the human eyeball to adjust the driver's ideal sitting position. A camera is attached on the trim panel just above the windshield and determines the position of the driver's face based on the near-infrared light coming from light-emitting diodes. This light is dependent on the shape and composition of the driver's eyeballs.

The camera eye sensor then sends its finding to the vehicle's driving-position templates to automatically adjust the seat, the pedals, the steering column, the center console, even the floor, so that the driver is now at an optimal height. Perfect for drivers who have no idea how to set up an ideal driving position for themselves, hence depriving themselves of the best view of the road which may contribute significantly to driving stress or even accidents.

CamCar

Blind spots play a major role in many road accidents. We bend our fenders, scratch our paint, or even collide head-on with another vehicle often because of poor visibility. Imagine a car that lets you see all angles around you, even those you can't possibly notice even if you crane your neck to its full extent. This is the objective of the CamCar technology, as fitted on the Lincoln Navigator. The CamCar has two pencil-size forward-facing video cameras mounted on the side mirrors. They give a 22-degree angle of coverage, or 116 meters of field of view at 300 meters. Two rear-facing cameras located on the front fenders complement the side-mirror cameras, giving the driver exceptional rear side view. The vehicle also has four miniature cameras mounted at its back, panning left to right to provide a coverage angle of 160 degrees. That's far wider than a typical rear-view mirror can provide. Finally, the CamCar features a night-vision low-light camera which assists the driver when backing up by providing a detailed image of the area directly behind the vehicle. It functions even in near-darkness.

All the images captured by the cameras of the CamCar are prominently displayed on video screens strategically located on the instrument panel.

SensorCar

Mazda Motor Corp. also submitted its own auto safety project in the form of the SensorCar, or a high-tech 626 sedan. Basically, the SensorCar makes a case for preimpact warning systems. Mazda thinks that pedestrian accidents and rear-end collisions can be substantially reduced if these systems are put in place. The SensorCar has a laser radar unit mounted on its grille, detecting pedestrian movements way ahead of the vehicle and alerting the driver by activating a warning light on the instrument panel and a beeping tone through the front speakers. It even automatically blows the horn if an object immediately in front of it is detected.

The SensorCar's rear bumper has sensors that are able to anticipate rear impacts. If the computer attached to the sensors detects a real crash threat, it activates the car's safety belt pretensioners to minimize the occupants' injuries

RescueCar

The worst place to figure in an accident is some place where immediate help is not present. The RescueCar, as demonstrated in a Ford Taurus, solves this problem by automatically calling emergency centers and informing them about the car's exact location through Global Positioning Satellite data. The vehicle not only gives location information, but also important data like the vehicle make, the identities and the medical histories of the most likely occupants, their seating positions when the accident happened (taken by an onboard camera), and even the vehicle's position after the accident. This eliminates the guessing game on the part of responding rescuers who are always at a loss as to the nature of the incident until they arrive on the scene.

SecureCar

The last vehicle on the exhibit was a special Volvo S80. Special because Volvo calls it the SecureCar. Big news in the United States were the deaths of children absent-mindedly left by their parents inside a vehicle or kids trapped inside compartment trunks. The SecureCar addresses this problem with three devices: a supersensitive microaccelerometer that measures even the faintest vibrations in the vehicle that could be a human heartbeat; a carbon-dioxide sensor that detects human respiration inside the trunk; and an illuminated touchpad, which opens the trunklid at the slightest contact of any bodily part. Soon parents who are stupid enough to leave their kid inside a car as if the child were a doggie bag, can heave a sigh of relief.

Motorists can have peace of mind that carmakers like Ford, Volvo and Mazda, are working overtime to make sure the vehicles we will be driving tomorrow are extremely safe.

But if the danger comes from abducting cops or bombs planted by martial-law freaks, ah, that is another story. It would take a lot more than the automotive expertise of carmakers to shield nation-loving motorists from them.

Airplanes should have 2 sets of rest rooms

FULL TANK

Al S. Mendoza

WHY don't commercial airplanes have separate rest rooms reserved for male and female passengers?

The airplane has been with us for decades now. But have you ever wondered why only a common rest room is shared by male and female passengers?

Maybe, to cut on expenses on the part of airline owners?

I cannot accept that. Plane fares are just about the most expensive of all fares, although that is not surprising since aviation fuel is the costliest of all motor fuels.

* * *

There are about six rest rooms on the average for a commercial airplane, the rest rooms found in the first-class cabin not included.

Why can't they be divided equally as to provide separate rest rooms for both sexes?

I pity the female passengers because most often, they are a bit more inconvenienced than the male passengers.

Maybe there's a compelling reason airplanes can't have separate rest rooms for both sexes?

I'm really, really interested.

My belief is that there ought to be a law requiring airplane makers, if not airplane owners, to provide separate rest rooms for male and female passengers.

Oftentimes, I have this strange feeling after stepping out of the plane's rest room each time I see a lady waiting for her turn to enter.

This "strange feeling" can only be removed if and when two sets of rest rooms are finally provided for in our airplanes.

What do you think, buddies?

* * *

The E-Pass is really magic.

A friend of mine has an E-Pass in the glove compartment of his car. In a recent trip to the South, he had no intention of using it yet. He was still undecided on which of his fleet of cars he would stick his E-Pass on.

But lo and behold. When my friend hit the entrance of the toll booth at the South Expressway, his E-Pass, still wrapped in a box and concealed in the glove compartment, registered and the green light switched on.

Scratching his head, he said he could only smile at the "magic of the E-Pass."

* * *

I can't understand why they put traffic lights at the innermost part of the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City.

Isn't that stretch of road designed to supposedly allow the free flow of traffic once you get there?

While installing those lights was simply a waste of money, the act only contributed to more traffic jams in that area that I traverse almost daily.

I therefore urge our officials to have those traffic lights removed and instead transferred to the crossing of Commonwealth Avenue and Don Diosdado Street in Don Enrique Heights, Quezon City, in front of St. Peter's Church.

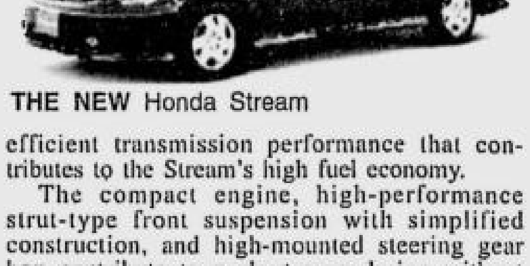
Crossing Commonwealth Avenue from Don Enrique Heights to St. Peter's Church has become really an ordeal. Every pedestrian trying to cross that portion is courting disaster.

Paging Mayor Mathay?

* * *

QUOTE ME. No, it's not yet time to take that umbrella out of your car. The rains have "come back."

Honda introduces Stream



THE NEW Honda Stream

TAKING advantage of Honda's latest flat-floor and low-center-of-gravity packaging techniques not found in other minivans, Honda Motor Co. Ltd. releases the new Honda Stream.

Possessing a design anticipating the style of the new century, the Stream fuses the stylish exterior appearance and sporty driving performance for personal use. Based on a dolphin motif and pursuing a style benefiting the model's concept, the Stream achieves a futuristic look characterized by a sense of integrated solidity defined by elegantly flowing lines. The elegant interior design is enhanced by a sporty cockpit feature that includes titanium-finish panels and 3-eye meter array.

The Stream also takes an innovative approach to minivan interior space, comfort and refinement as it achieves cabin space capable of seating up to 7 adults. The redesigned under-floor layout and a Reactive Link Double Wishbone Suspension combine to ensure a significant lowered floor which contributes the realization of a stylish form within which all seats offer comfortable sitting space. The front seat row is arranged for a better seat hold and easier walk-though. Also, a collapsible third-row folds down to provide an easy access flat-floor rear cargo area similar to that found in station wagons.

The Stream is equipped with a newly developed 2.0-liter DOHC i-VTEC that combines Honda's original VTEC technology with VTC or Variable Timing Control achieving a highly intelligent engine performance. The 5-speed automatic transmission also offers an S-Matic sequential mode that allows the driver to enjoy the feeling of manual shifting when desired, realizing a high-level integration of constantly smooth shifting and highly responsive performance to match a wide variety of driving conditions. Also, the new ultraflat torque converter and other features ensure highly efficient transmission performance that contributes to the Stream's high fuel economy.

The compact engine, high-performance strut-type front suspension with simplified construction, and high-mounted steering gear box contribute to a short-nose design without sacrificing running or safety performance.

Further, Honda incorporated the G-CON impact absorption technology in order to put its collision safety performance on par with the highest standards in the world. Driver and front passenger-side SRS airbags are included as standard equipment on all Stream variant.

BOMB SCARE

Commuters, motorists urged to stay awake

BY TESSA RELAMPAGOS SALAZAR

BE on the lookout, or pay dearly.

The bomb scare has reared its ugly head out once more. Along with it has come the increased level of "street anxiety." Paranoia is here. And it came the moment the first of the five bombs struck noon of Dec. 30, 2000. The bombs were cruel, snuffing out the lives of innocent commuters and two dedicated law enforcers.

But trust the Filipino to have short memories. It would not be long when we would again let our guards down, and be once more lax in our personal security out in the streets.

During last year's earlier spate of bombings, this reporter's interview with Land Transportation Office's traffic and safety education chief Daisy Jacobo yielded some timely tips: Since bomb scares caused fear, she said, the best antidote is to control the fear itself. The social terror and paralysis among the population may probably be the greatest damage a bomb scare can sow, much more than the actual physical damage.

Although we may not be bomb experts, or keep trained dog-sniffers with us, we can help curb the next bomb attacks, the next bomb scares. Here are some precautionary measures given by our law enforcement's Firearms and Explosives Division

- **Be on the lookout for unattended baggage, bags, boxes and parcels.** It could be on a parking lot, public vehicle or any establishment. Small items don't necessarily have to be overlooked. Tightly wrapped and compact packages, envelopes or wrappers with oily stains and ticking sounds can be telltale signs of an explosive device. One important note: Finders should never move, touch or even attempt to open these unattended envelopes or packages.

Harness the power of the Internet to keep you informed. Various websites offer valuable info on bomb detection. There are ways to identify a package bomb. Some of these include: oil stains on wrapping, protruding wires, no return addresses, incorrect titles with name, or strange odors. A letter bomb, on the other hand, has restrictive markings, often indicated as mail from a foreign country, has excessive postage, misspelled words, is rigid or bulky and has no return address.

- **Smell.** Whether you are waiting for the next train or you are in a parking lot, be aware of the scent of spilled gasoline or something burning.

This is especially applicable for homemade bombs, such as the Molotov that contains highly flammable gases.

- **Be on the lookout for suspicious looking persons carrying knapsacks.** These persons act uneasy and check their wristwatches too frequently. Law enforcers say that the giveaway comes when these persons abruptly disembark in intersections leaving their bags or knapsacks behind. Improvised time bombs are equipped with a timing device or recorder that would give ample time for the terrorist to escape.
- **For vehicle owners who still haven't installed safety and alarm devices on the vehicle, it is high time that you do now.** Vehicle owners who use parking lots should also scan the area for suspicious-looking people before leaving the vehicle. With or without bomb scares, motorists are advised that before parking on public parking areas at night, make sure that the area is well lit.
- **Evacuate a vehicle immediately when you suspect a bomb has been planted.** Make sure that you, your passengers and other passersby are at least 300 feet away from the suspected bomb.

Police assistance is a phone call away. The Explosive Ordinance Disposal division (EOD) in Metro Manila with telephone numbers at the EOD Camp Crame, 721-8544, 723-0411 local 4514; Northern Police District, 287-3504; Eastern Police District, 642-8136, 641-0877; Western Police District, 523-1251; Southern Police District, 818-2078; and Central Police District, 924-3101

Nissan's classy understatement

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

IT takes gumption to challenge the auto industry's marketing mantra that bigger is better. And chutzpah to make the challenge with a defiantly nostalgic twist. Nissan Motor Philippines Inc. showed both gumption and chutzpah when it introduced last July the Nissan Verita, a small four-door hatchback reminiscent of those British classics of the 1950s, the Austin Mini and Morris Minor. Because of its retro look, the Verita is the antithesis of the futuristic-looking Toyota Echo, another small four-door hatchback with a 1.3-liter engine.

Many people mistake the Verita for a European car the first time they see it, so classic are its lines of composition and compleat, self-contained compactness, not to mention the deliberately circular headlamps, signal lights and taillights plus the lavish chrome detailing on the roof and front bumper. Fidelity to the retro theme is carried over to the choice of 13-inch wheels: instead of alloy wheels, the Verita has chromed steel wheels.

But there's more to marvel at when you look inside: not only is the retro look accentuated by the circular, white-colored gauges and analogue clock, the tasteful combination of chrome and wood trims and the light beige leather seats and retractable grab handles; all the conveniences of new millennium driving are at hand, such as a four-speed automatic transmission, electronically adjustable lumbar support in the driver's seat, power steering, power windows, power side mirrors and central locking. And a 12-disc Pioneer CD changer tucked under the front seat and a superb six-speaker audio system.

You don't have to window-tint the Verita for protection against the sun's ultraviolet rays. Nissan says the Verita uses UV-cut glass that deflects 92 percent of ultraviolet rays. Come to think of it, window-tinting the Verita would not be in keeping with its retro look.

Because of its low ground clearance, driving the Verita gives you the feeling that you're only a few inches above the surface of the road, not unlike the feeling of driving a low-slung vintage sportscar. The trade-off here is that you feel the bounce of every pothole more keenly and driving through a flooded area would be riskier than usual. But then the Verita had to be built close to the ground to maintain its retro appearance.

Under the Verita's hood throbs Nissan's responsive and reliable 1.3-liter, 16-valve 4-in-line twin cam powerplant with ECCS (Electronic Concentrated Engine Control System). For a car of this size and weight, I found the 1.3-liter engine to be more than adequate, displaying an accelerating power and steadiness that caught a few bigger cars on the road by surprise.

The Verita's retro design, specifically its chromed steel-and-wood steering wheel, precludes the incorporation of an airbag. (Neither does the Honda Civic have an air bag, for that matter.) However, the Verita has standard safety features such as 3-point ELR seatbelts, side impact door beams, a high-mount stop lamp and crumple zones front and rear. It stands to reason that when you drive a car like the Verita, you tend to drive more carefully and responsibly.

For the Verita, more than anything else, was designed to be an owner-driven car. Because of its size and price (P648,000), the Verita is not meant for the mass market. It's not meant for those who measure a person's worthiness by the bulk and horsepower of his car. Nor is it for those who fancy themselves to be race drivers. Rather, the Verita is a classy understatement meant for those who make—and want—a difference.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Relax. It's just a lane change.

* * *

E-mail comments to aida_sevilla@pacific.net.ph

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The School of Science and Engineering of the Ateneo de Manila University under a CHED Center of Excellence project invites all interested parties to pre-qualify and bid to supply, deliver and install any or all of the following equipment in its research laboratories:

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Pre-qualification forms may be obtained from the Office of the Dean, School of Science and Engineering, 3rd Floor, Science Education Complex, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City from **January 15 to 24, 2001** upon the presentation of a letter of intent and certified true copies of SEC certificate of registration and latest business permit. Deadline for the submission of forms and requirement is at 5:00 p.m. on **January 24, 2001.**

The Ateneo de Manila University reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any required formality and accept the offer most advantageous to the University. It assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

PDI Jan 4, 2001

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• MARA PAWNSHOP •
Branch of 2202 M. Roxas corner Pedro Gil St., Sta. Ana Manila. Auction Sale on **January 10, 2001** **Wednesday at 2:30** in the afternoon. Respectively, August 9-Sept. 10, 2000.
Sons of J.Lanuza, Auctioneer

PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

MARA PAWNSHOP
I, II, III IV and Comembo Branch of Makati City
• Auction Sale •
on January 10, 2001
Wednesday at 10:30, 11:30, 12:30 and 8:30 in the morning and in the afternoon. Respectively, August 9-Sept. 10, 2000.
Sons of J. Lanuza, Auctioneer

• MI MARA PAWNSHOP •
of 251 Quirino Ave., Baclaran, Paranaque ,MM
Auction Sale on
• January 10, 2001 •
Wednesday at 4:00 in the afternoon. Respectively, August 9-Sept. 10, 2000
Sons of J. Lanuza, Auctioneer.

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of **CLARITA PAGE H. CARIN** who died intestate in Cebu City on May 11, 1996 has been the subject of deed of extrajudiciatl settlement of her heirs and entered as Doc. No. 438, Page No. 69, Book No. 3, Series of 2000 of Notary Public Atty Oscar Maria H. Tan, Jr. (PDI, Dec. 28, 2000 Jan. 4, & 11, 2001)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of **ROGELIO HERMOSO** who died intestate in Cebu City on September 10,1999 has been the subject of a deed of extrajudicial settlement of his heirs and entered as Doc. No. 439, Page No. 69, Book No. 3, Series of 2000 of Notary Public Atty. Oscar Maria H. Tan Jr. (PDI - Dec. 30, 2000, Jan 4, & 11,2001)

OBITUARIES

Our Dearly Beloved

HONORIO "Nory" S. SORIANO

of Malabon, Metro Manila

Peacefully joined our Lord on Saturday, December 30, 2000 at the age of 51.

His loving wife **Solly**; children **Nikki**, **Tanya** and **Archie**; together with brothers **Arsie** (†) and **Benec**; sister **Tessie**; his sisters-in-law **Ludy**, **Elena**; brother-in-law **Larry**; nieces **Missy**, **Cindy**, **Diana** husband **John** and their daughter **Eva**; **Sheryl**, **Shiny** and **Wendy**; husband **Don** and their daughter **Elsie**; best friend **Domeng**, other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at FLORESCO FUNERAL HOME, Gen. Luna Street, Malabon, Metro Manila.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 6, 2001 at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina at 10:00 AM.

Our Dearly Beloved

MAXIMO F. DACANAY

2nd Lt. PC (Ret.)
of Tukuran, Zamboanga del Sur

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 29, 2000 at the age of 78.

He is remembered by his loving wife **Priscilla**; children **Cely** and **Eddie**, **Ben** and **Elsie**, **Camilo** and **Ester**, **Dodong**, **Beth** and **Doodz**, **Glory** and **Jumar**; grandchildren and other relatives.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

By January 4, 2001, 6 p.m. Mass at Chapel C-11, Funeraria Paz.

Interment will be held on Friday, January 5, 2001 at the Heavens Gate Memorial Park, Antipolo City, Metro Manila, at 10:00 in the morning.

> ***"We know that God raised the Lord Jesus from death. He will raise us to life with Jesus. He will present us, along with you, to God."***
>
> ***2 Corinthians 4:14***

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

LORETA P. VARGAS

of Virac, Catanduanes

who joined her Creator on December 20, 2000

Sincerely convey our deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who offered prayers, sent flowers, visited and kept vigil, attended the funeral rites and condoled with us in our moment of grief.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Labor and Employment
National Wages and Productivity Commission
REGIONAL TRIPARTITE WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY BOARD
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Pursuant to Section 3, Republic Act No. 6727 and Chapter III Section II of its Implementing Rules, any person, company, corporation, partnership or any entity engaged in business shall submit an ESTABLISHMENT REPORT using NWPC Form I (Revised 1997) published hereunder, to the appropriate Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board-not later than January 31, of the following year.

In this connection, please be informed that all establishment reports for the year 2000 in the National Capital Region shall be submitted not later than January 31, 2001 at the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board-National Capital Region located at the Room 11-C, 11th Floor, G.E. Antonino Building corner T.M. Kalaw and J. Bocobo Streets, Ermita, Manila. Establishment report forms are available at the RTWPB-NCR or at the National Wages and Productivity Commission. For further details, please call telephone numbers 5275155 or 4006765.

(Sgd.) **ALEX E. MARAAN**
Chairman, RTWPB-NCR

NWPC Form 1 (Revised 1997)
ESTABLISHMENT REPORT

Industry Code

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Labor and Employment
NATIONAL WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
REGIONAL TRIPARTITE WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY BOARD
Region ________

Pursuant to Section 3 of R.A. 6722 or the Wage Rationalization Act and Chapter III, Section II of its Implementing Rules, any person, company, corporation, partnership or any entity engaged in business shall submit this form properly accomplished to the appropriate Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board not later than January 31 of the following year.	REFERENCE PERIOD as of December 31, 2000

ESTABLISHMENT DATA

Name of Establishment: Industry Code	Complete Address Head Office: Area Code Plant Site:

Type of Business: ☐ Corporation ☐ Partnership ☐ Single Proprietorship

Economy Activity:	Principal Activity/Product:	No. of Working Days per Week ________ No. of Working Hours per Week ________
Name of Bargaining Unit/ Representative, if any:	No. of Workers Covered by CBA: ________	Amount of Wage Increase for the year (Average per Employee): Through CBA ________ Mgt. Initiated ________

EMPLOYMENT DATA

Total Employment : ________
Male : ________
Female : ________

Total Number of Workers Below Managerial Level : ________
Male : ________
Female : ________

Number of Employees/Workers by Status
Total : ________
Regular : ________
Temporary : ________
Probationary : ________
Contractual : ________
Apprentice/Learner : ________
Seasonal : ________
Others, please specify : ________

WORKERS/EMPLOYEES BELOW MANAGERIAL LEVEL
(Including learners, apprentices, and disabled workers)

Employee's Name	Sex a/	Age	Status of Employment b/	Occupation/Position	Major Function		Basic Wage/Salary		Allowance/Compensation Regularly Received	
						Occu. Code	Amount	Mode of Payment c/	Amount	Type
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
7.										
8.										
9.										
10										

a/ (M) Male (F) Female Please use additional sheets, if necessary.
b/ (R) Regular/Permanent (T) Temporary (P) Probationary (C) Contractual (A/L) Apprentice/Learner (S) Seasonal (O) Others, please specify
c/ (h) per hour (d) per day (w) per week (m) per month (p) per piece

STATUTORY BENEFITS

☐ Legal Holidays
☐ Service Incentive Leave ____days/year
☐ Maternity Leave (___days)
☐ 13th Month Pay
☐ Premium Pay
☐ Overtime Pay
☐ Night Shift Differential
☐ Separation Pay
☐ Retirement Pay
☐ Disability Pay

SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS GIVEN TO EMPLOYEES/WORKERS
(Please check the appropriate boxes)

Paid Leaves
☐ Vacation __days/year
☐ Sick __days/year
☐ Paternity __days/year
☐ Company __days/year
Declared Holidays
☐ Bereavement Leave __days/year
☐ Others, please specify
______ __days/year
______ __days/year
______ __days/year

Services
☐ Medical
☐ Hospitalization
☐ Transportation
☐ Housing
☐ Others, please specify

Bonuses
☐ Mid-year
☐ Year-end
☐ Christmas
☐ Productivity
☐ Profit Sharing
☐ Others, please specify

Other Benefits
☐ Meal Allowance
☐ Uniform/Clothing
☐ Transportation Allo.
☐ Longevity Pay
☐ Others, please specify

PRODUCTIVITY RELATED PROGRAMS

☐ Housekeeping/5S
☐ Labor-Management Cooperation
☐ Performance/Incentive
☐ Performance Management
☐ Quality Control Circle
☐ Resources Management
☐ Suggestion Scheme
☐ Total Quality Management
☐ Others, please specify

PERSON TO CONTACT IF ANY QUESTIONS ARISE REGARDING THIS FORM Printed Name and Signature: ____ Position Tel No ___	Remarks:	DO NOT FILL SHADED PORTION Edited by: ____ Reviewed by: ____	Thank you for your cooperation

DEFINITION OF TERMS

ESTABLISHMENT - an economic unit engaged in one or predominantly one kind of economic activity under a single ownership or control at a more or less fixed location, e.g. an individual farm, mine, factory, store, etc.. For multi-unit enterprises with branches, outlets, and subsidiary is considered an establishment.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY - this refers to the main or primary product/activity or service of the establishment.

TOTAL EMPLOYMENT - the total number of persons engaged in the activities of the establishment. This includes those working in the establishment and receiving pay as well as those working away from the establishment when paid by and under the control of the establishment. Includes such persons, whether working full time or part time. Includes all employees on sick leave, paid vacation and holiday. Excludes consultants, homeworkers and workers receiving commissions only.

EMPLOYEES BELOW MANAGERIAL LEVEL - consists of all paid employees in positions below managers, executives and other administrative and technical personnel whose primary duties involve the management of a department or an establishment.

MAJOR FUNCTION - primary duties and responsibilities performed by the employee.

SERVICE INCENTIVE LEAVE - every employee who has rendered at least one (1) year if service is entitled to a yearly service incentive leave of five (5) days with pay. The service incentive leave may be used for sick and vacation leave purposes.

PREMIUM PAY - additional compensation required by law for work performed within eight (8) hours on non-working days such as rest days and special days.

PROFIT SHARING - a scheme whereby the employer distributes to employees share of the profits.

PRODUCTIVITY BONUS - distribution of gains brought by increased productivity.

HOUSEKEEPING / 5S - a step by step disciplined effort to practice good housekeeping. It is one of the basic approaches in improving productivity, quality and safety in the enterprise.

LABOR MANAGEMENT COOPERATION - a mechanism where problems and concerns of mutual interest to both labor and management are identified and solved cooperatively. These problems and concerns are normally outside the coverage of collective bargaining.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - a program that tackles the company's operating concerns such as absenteeism, tardiness, poor work, employee complaints, motivation problems and the like.

QUALITY CONTROL CIRCLE - a program where a small group of employees meets regularly to solve problems in their work area.

RESOURCES MANAGEMENT - a program that enables the supervisors and employees to implement practical resource-saving projects which produce tangible, measurable, bottomline results.

SUGGESTION SCHEME - a system/program that absorbs employees' ideas for improving the company's operation.

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM) - a systematic process of improving customer satisfaction by applying quality improvement principles, tools and techniques throughout an organization.

CERTIFICATION I hereby certify that the above information are true and correct. Employer or Authorized Representative Position/Designation Date Telephone No.	Subscribed and sworn to before me this ______th day of ____________, 2000, employer exhibiting his/her Residence Certificate No. ____________ issued ________ on ________ Notary Public

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OBITUARIES

"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me".
John 14:6

PIN GIAH NG TIUTAN

Died in the Grace of our Lord on 02 January 2001 at the age of 76.

Her loving spouse **TAN SUY (TIU SIONG DIO)**; children **Thomas & Annie**, **Tony** (✝), **Mariano & Vicky**, **Richie & Marlo**, **Josie & Ernie Rodriguez**, **Robert & Bel**, **Cesar & Malu**, and **Mike & Esther**; together with her grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives and friends request everyone to pray for the eternal repose of her soul and to rejoice with us at her return to our Creator.

Her remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapel along Araneta Avenue in Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, 07 January 2001 at the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat, Parañaque at 9:00 PM.

With Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior

BERNABE OCAMPO GALANG SR.

Had entered into life eternal
on December 31, 2000.

His wife **Minda**; children **Ronnie**, **Rodel**, **Robert** and **Bernie**; grandchildren **Lian** and **Kayla**, other relatives enjoin everyone to praise God for the wonderful and fruitful 62 years given to him.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Trinity Chapels, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Friday, January 5, 2001 at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City at 2:00 PM.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
Matthew 10:39

SALUD DEPUSOY-BAHIA

(Widow of Dr. Rodolfo G. Bahia of Balayan, Batangas)

Passed away on December 29, 2000
at the Cabrini Medical Centre, New York City, U.S.A.

Her bereaved children and children-in-law **YOLY** and **MANNY CRISOL**, **LENY** and **SERGIO GUADIZ**, **GUIA** and **BRUCE REITBERG** and **HAYDEE B. GONZALEZ**; grandchildren **EDGIE** and **BETH**, **MICHELLE** and **RENE**, **MELISSA**, **RUDI**, **DANNY**, **LEO**, and **JAMES**; great grandsons **MYLES** and **REN REN**; her sisters **LORETO** and **FILOMENA**; brother **CONRADO** and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains will be interred in Holy Rood Cemetery, Long Island, New York.

We design OBITUARIES for FREE.

Our Dearly Beloved

ADELAIDA "AIDA" MANZO RECIO

Peacefully joined our Lord on January 2, 2001 at the age of 65.

Her loving husband Apec; children Edene, Jojo and Elyne, Boy and Cora, Grace, Malou, Marie, Ces; grandchildren Apryll, Katrina, Mark, Tintin, Chino, Cheche and Abby together with sisters, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Our Lady of Fatima Chapel, Hilda Village, Project 8, Quezon City

Interment will be on January 07, 2001 at the Holy Cross Cemetery after 8 a.m. Mass.

"In peace I lie down and at once fall asleep, for it is you and none other, Yahweh, who make me rest secure." *Psalm 4 3:5*

Group seeks ₱1.50 cut in fuel prices

By Christine A. Gaylican

A CONSUMERS group said yesterday the country's oil firms should be trimming their prices by P1.40 to P1.50 a liter instead of only 40 centavos a liter.

Consumer Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion said in a news briefing that excluding cost under-recoveries reported by the oil companies, petroleum prices could even be rolled back by as much as P2.60 a liter.

"The oil price rollback is really due this month and the forthcoming Opec (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) meeting has nothing to do with it. I am really confused why local oil firms are factoring this out," Concepcion said.

Petron Corp., the country's biggest oil refiner, said it planned to reduce retail fuel prices to match rates announced by small oil companies on Tuesday, before Opec meets on Jan. 17.

Petron, a joint venture between the Philippine government and Aramco Overseas Co. BV, might cut prices of gasoline, diesel and other petroleum products by at least 40 centavos a liter in the next two weeks, Petron spokesman Antonio Pelayo said.

"We're ready to implement a 40-centavo to 60-centavo per liter price rollback before the Jan. 17 Opec meeting in consideration of the new players' move to reduce prices by 20 centavos to 25 centavos a liter," said Pelayo.

Eastern Petroleum Corp., Seaoil Philippines Inc. and Flying V said Tuesday they would cut gasoline prices.

Local oil refiners are under pressure to cut prices because of falling world crude prices and a relatively stable foreign exchange rate in December.

The price of Dubai crude, a benchmark used by local oil companies, fell from $30.32 per barrel in November to $21.65 a barrel in December, while the peso moved from just 49.91 per dollar to 49.99 per dollar.

The government earlier suggested oil companies cut prices by as much as P1 per liter.

Petron earlier said it would decide to cut oil prices after the Opec meets to decide on a new round of production cuts to boost world crude prices.

With a report from Bloomberg

RP to stay on 'dirty money' list

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday the Philippines would likely remain in the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force's watch list of countries judged non-cooperative in the fight against money laundering.

"I doubt we will be de-listed from the laundering list unless two crucial measures are passed. This is the easing of the bank secrecy law and making laundering a criminal act," Buenaventura said in an interview.

The Financial Action Task Force is maintaining its hit list of 15 countries considered as havens for money laundering.

Russia and the Philippines were both cited as countries that had taken preliminary steps to combat money laundering, but legislative measures were now needed, the task force said.

The 29-nation Financial Action Task Force cited seven other countries or territories on its list that were deemed to have taken concrete action to stop money laundering: the Bahamas, the Cook Islands, Israel, Panama, Liechtenstein, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Cayman Islands.

Others kept on the list were Lebanon, Dominica, the Marshall Islands, Naura Island, Niue Island and Saint Kitts-Nevis.

Task force president Jose Maria Roldan said the Philippines had been found to "have engaged in a political plan or have proceeded in changing their regulations" and now needed to follow this up with legislative measures.

Before removing any nation from the list, the Financial Action Task Force would pay "particular attention to reforms made to penal legislation, to financial supervision, to client identification, to communication of suspicious activities and to international co-operation," he said.

Palace scraps port monopoly policy

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG has agreed to adopt an anti-monopoly policy in the privatization of the country's major ports to promote competition between terminal operators and port service providers.

President Estrada is expected to sign today an executive order adopting a multiple contractor policy in the government's port privatization and modernization program wherever viable and mandatory public bidding of all government port facilities and service contracts.

This means that the government will have to carve up North Harbor into at least two service areas for public bidding.

The draft executive order will formally revoke the controversial Executive Order 59 signed by Mr. Estrada in December 1998, which originally ordered the privatization of the country's major ports through a negotiated bidding but was later revised, after intense public outcry, to limit its scope to North Harbor through a public bidding but still under a single operator or monopoly contract. EO 59 was verbally revoked in October last year.

In the executive order, Malacañang admitted that EO 59 would create a nationwide port monopoly that would adversely affect the economy through higher cost and poor service levels to the detriment of port users, port workers and consumers.

"Only competition and the prevention of combinations in restraint of trade will assure the appropriate level of port modernization and operation that serves the public interest best which can only be achieved through a fair, transparent and open bidding process," the draft executive order said.

TOP 10 BUSINESS STORIES OF 2000

A price verdict for tobacco

A Florida jury ordered several tobacco companies to pay a record $145 billion to smokers and their families, a penalty the companies say could put them out of business.

Hurry up and wait

The flying public saw a year of flight delays caused by overloaded airports, airline labor disputes and other problems that never seemed to ease.

Pumped-up prices

Soaring oil prices pushed costs up at the pump across the nation. Some regions even saw gasoline prices pass $2 per gallon.

2.05
2.15
2.24
Car Wash
Soft-Touch

Abandoned by the bull

Markets start year strong, but end on a sour note

The bull market was over by the end of 2000. The once mighty stock market, embattled by poor earnings reports and concerns over a slowing economy, plummeted, claiming $3 trillion in investor wealth.

The biggest corporate wedding

Though the deal was still pending at year's end, America Online Inc.'s acquisition of Time Warner Inc. became the largest merger in U.S. corporate history. The companies won approval to merge by the Federal Trade Commission after making concessions that would protect consumers.

Off to work we go

Unemployment fell to an all-time record low of 3.9 percent during 2000 and ended the year at 4 percent.

The Greenspan effect

Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan had investors hanging on his every word when he declared by the end of the year that inflation had eased and the federal fund rate would remain unchanged.

A giant breakup

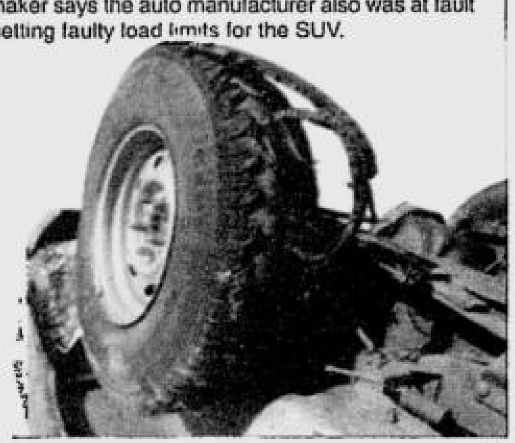
In June, U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson ruled that software giant Microsoft Corp. was an unfair monopoly that must be broken up.

Dot-com casualties

The darlings of the Nasdaq composite, the dot-coms lost favor with investors as the weakness of many ventures were exposed, leading to layoffs, cutbacks and even the demise of some companies. Included in the list of casualties are Furniture.com, Pets.com and ValueAmerica.com.

All were recalled

A massive recall of Bridgestone/Firestone tires began after investigators blamed tire separation as the cause of many accidents involving Ford Motor Co.'s Explorer sports utility vehicle. Ford blamed Firestone, but the tiremaker says the auto manufacturer also was at fault for setting faulty load limits for the SUV.



Source: Compiled from AP wire reports

AP

Napocor sale set aside

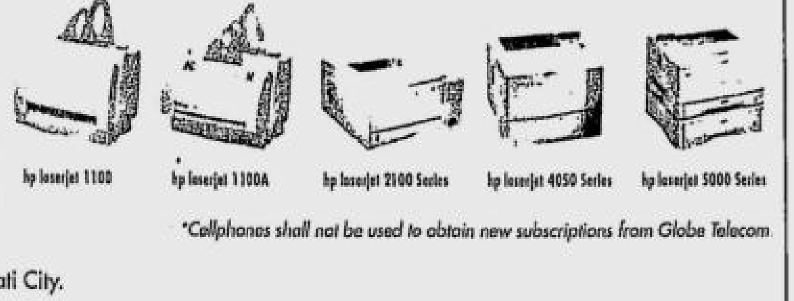
THE DEPARTMENT of Energy has given up hope that Congress will approve anytime soon bills privatizing the National Power Corp.

Energy Secretary Mario Tiaoqui said in an interview that the energy department and Napocor would instead concentrate on getting from Congress a law restructuring the power sector.

"We hope that we could pursue the restructuring of the power industry first and the privatization of Napocor could be taken up later because we believe that the selling of Napocor's assets is dependent on the success of the industry's restructuring," Tiaoqui said.

A bicameral congressional committee has scheduled special sessions from Jan. 8 to 12 to discuss bills seeking to restructure the power sector.

Tiaoqui said among the seven separate bills sent to the committee, Napocor's privatization was still under deliberation.



HP LaserJet's Getting Personal...1 on 1!

1 Get a chance to win personal tools such as a Nokia cellphone, HP Jornada handheld PC or an HP Omnibook 6000 notebook!

From January 2, 2001 to February 28, 2001, every buyer of an HP LaserJet 1100 or 1100A printer will be given a raffle coupon for a chance to win any of the following prizes.

One First Prize: HP Omnibook laptop computer
Three Second Prizes: HP Jornada handheld PC
Ten Third Prizes: Nokia cellphone*

After filling up the coupon, it must be dropped at the drop box located at the store where the LaserJet was purchased no later than Feburary 28, 2001. The draw will be on Monday, March 5, 2001 at 3:00 PM at the HP offices, Rufino Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati, under the supervision of the DTI. Winners will be notified by registered mail. Claimants must present the raffle claim stub and proof of purchase to Majico, de la Paz & Associates, Valuepoint Executive Apartments, 227 Salcedo St., Legaspi Village, Makati. Prizes may be claimed up to 60 days from notification. Cellphone prizes are transferrable but not convertible to cash. A participant can only win once. If his name is drawn more than once, he gets the bigger prize.
Those disqualified from joining this promotion are employees of Hewlett-Packard, their dealers and advertising agencies and relatives up to the second degree of affinity or consanguinity.

2 Buy 1 printer, get 1 toner FREE!

From January 2, 2001 to February 28, 2001 every buyer of the HP LaserJet 4050, 2100 or 5000 printers will receive one free HP toner. To receive the toner, claimants must present proof of purchase to Majico, de la Paz & Associates, 3rd floor, Valuepoint Executive Apartments, 227 Salcedo St., Legaspi Village, Makati. Deadline for claiming is April 30, 2001.
For this promotion, the 20% tax of prizes exceeding P10,000 will be paid by Hewlett-Packard.

hp invent

hp laserjet 1100 hp laserjet 1100A hp laserjet 2100 Series hp laserjet 4050 Series hp laserjet 5000 Series

*Cellphones shall not be used to obtain new subscriptions from Globe Telecom

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MON. - FRI. (8 AM - 7 PM) / SATURDAY (8 AM - 3 PM)

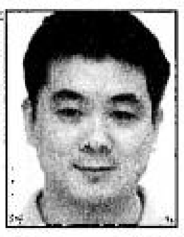
LIFESTYLE
CHELO BANAL-FORMOSO, Editor

Which is the only A+ formula?
ASK YOUR PEDIATRICIAN TODAY.
MeadJohnson Nutritionals

Tastes

The five best restaurants in Metro Manila

THE MAD TEA PARTY



Clinton Palanca

AT THE END of the year is usually when the publishers of restaurant guides release the new editions for the upcoming year, and is usually a tense time for most restaurants.

For the top-tier restaurants, the difference between a 27 or a 28 in Zagat's, or the demotion from three Michelin stars to two, can rock a particular establishment's prestige to the foundations. For restaurants seeking to make their mark, a favorable review in the Gault-Millau or a Top 100 listing in Time Out can spell the difference between being just another anonymous restaurant, and being the hot new place in town. Profits are affected almost directly by these reviews; proprietors take them very, very seriously, and chefs have been known to launch themselves into the bouillon.

There is no comparable dining guide in our country, certainly none that has the authority and legitimacy of these publications. Only a handful of food critics, foremost among them of course being Doreen G. Fernandez of this paper, are influential enough to "place" a restaurant on the scene. I remember the consternation at our restaurant when we heard that Ms Fernandez had placed a reservation for that evening. I tried to remember everything that had come up in conversation with her as to her likes and dislikes, her personal preferences and pet peeves. To our delight, we received a very favorable review, but I remember thinking to myself that it was a great deal of responsibility to be placed on one person's individual experience of a meal.

What makes an expert?

To evaluate a restaurant, especially a great restaurant (and I use the word "great" in the most pompous and self-important sense of the word, as in "Great Men of History," the ones whose toenail clippings are on public view at museums), requires multiple tastings, not just by one person, but by several. Each restaurant is different at lunch and at dinner, is more proficient at meats or at seafood, can be glorious one day and mediocre the next, depending on whether the chef is in a foul mood or the sous chef is wearing his wife's lace underwear by mistake. The methodology of the evaluation differs from guide to guide and from country to country: the practice in Europe is often to have an announced visit, while in America, the restaurant critic usually masquerades as an anonymous consumer, relying on the benefit of a putty nose and a false moustache.

Dining guides such as Zagat's, in typically American democratic fashion, bases its evaluation on the summation of the opinion of a "pool" of reviewers, which now number in the thousands. European guides rely on the expertise of a few persons: the fabled Michelin inspectors, or whomever has now been delegated to take on the roles formerly occupied by Henri Gault and Christian Millau (one of whom recently died; they are so indistinguishable in the public mind that Time ran an obituary on the wrong one).

Which brings us to the question: What makes someone a food expert? The question is not being posed theoretically, because I am about to name what I think are the best restaurants in Metro Manila today. This implies that I am anointing myself as a food expert, and I am sure that there are many scornful people out there who would question my legitimacy. Unfortunately, there is no system of accreditation, as there might be for, say, psychologists: Don't you feel more comforted that your questions about your boyfriend's strange sexual practices ("I love him very much but he always likes to involve mangosteen in our lovemaking") are being answered by Dr. Margarita Holmes?

In the food world, there are only self-styled experts. I refuse to pander to these detractors by citing my credentials. I shall simply repeat with confidence and conviction: I know what I'm talking about. And even if I don't, I'll make something up, and say it with confidence and conviction.

Also remember that this list is not the product of systematic evaluation; these are merely the restaurants that I think are the five best places to eat in Metro Manila. However, I do eat out a lot (every night, as a matter of fact), and I've thought long and hard about this list. I evaluate each restaurant in terms of the standards it sets for itself (i.e., one can't fault a *carinderia* for not having cloth napkins). I also include in each evaluation the ambience and value for money as I believe these are integral parts of the dining experience: I wouldn't want to have haute cuisine in a sewer; nor would I pay P2,000 for an omelet, even if it were a very, very good omelet. Oh, and by the way, I always pay for my meals.

Old Manila at the Peninsula

The best of the hotel restaurants. It has enough hauteur to give the meal a sense of occasion and formality, but the staff is always friendly and accommodating, and—an easy trick, but it always works—they remember your name. At a time when the preeminence of classical French cuisine is on the wane, they have the laudable temerity to cook traditional dishes and to put less immediately likeable items on the menu, such as sweetbreads and calves' liver. But it is their facility with simple dishes, such as the mushroom soup or the lobster bisque, that make us confident that we are in capable hands.

Recently, I asked them to prepare a banquet, which would involve some very simple, very classical dishes: test pieces, as it were, that every good chef should be able to do with his eyes closed. Any chef can dazzle with "inventive" dishes full of truffle oil and raspberry vinaigrette, but the fluency with which he executes a simple dish is the best test of all. Besides, these "easy" dishes are often the most delicious, it is merely that they have gone out of fashion. I asked for: half a dozen oysters, foie gras in a chestnut and apple soup, sole *meuniere*, roasted Bresse chicken and raspberry pavlova. The soup was the only disappointment (it came out as a sort of sweet goo), but everything else was wonderfully done, the service was excellent and the pricing was reasonable: exactly half, in fact, of what Cheval Blanc wanted to charge me for the same menu (and they wouldn't move unless I gave a deposit; the Pen simply said okay and asked for date and time).

The only caveat is that the desserts on the à la carte menu somehow fail to live up to the complexity of the appetizers and main courses; even the cheese plate is suitably sophisticated, numbering among the selection an Epoisse, the likes of which are rarely seen here. The desserts seem ho-hum, anticlimactic. And after all that silver and traditional tableside service, the tea comes as… a teabag? Beside a cup of tepid water? The afternoon tea selection includes loose-leaf Fortnum and Mason and Fauchon teas, brewed in a real teapot; why can't the after-dinner tea service receive the same attention?

Furusato

Yes, I know it isn't the best Japanese restaurant in town; Tsukiji deserves that appellation. But really, unless some rich old relative has died or you've found a credit card lying in the street, forget P6,000 a meal for two persons. Furusato is a little more expensive than the average Japanese restaurant, but is almost always worth it. I am there almost predictably often, to the groans of my dinner companions; but the food is comfortingly consistent. The scallop *maki*, the raw sweet shrimps, the spicy tuna roll, are all scrumptious and not at all your usual fare; nevertheless classics such as sukiyaki are done excellently, as well. They have a good hand with the *kobe* beef, if you are so inclined; and they have a *kobe* beef set, which includes a seafood course beforehand, which I always feel is good value for money, and which I treat myself to when I have reason to celebrate or I've just been dumped (sometimes it's the same thing). If you have time, take the plunge and plough through a *kaiseki* set (a kind of Japanese set-meal that depends on the whims of the chef), which is time-consuming but always interesting.

Aqua, at the Enterprise Center

People often complain that the food is irregular; not in the sense of being weird, but in the sense of being inconsistent. It's one of the dangers that a restaurant with its ambitions runs into: the desire to be inventive often results in veering too far off the edge, and plunging into the ravine of "fusion confusion." But as often as I've had off notes at Aqua, I've had sublime moments; and their cooking can be very, very good indeed. I've noticed a certain timidity in the menu recently; they are sticking more and more to "safe" dishes, and some of the wackier items on the dessert menu have disappeared. I particularly miss one which resembles a cube of meringue (it looked like scorched tofu) but was light and textured, the perfect foil to fruit. Another reassuring thing about this restaurant is the constant presence of the chef/owner, Markus Gfeller, who is usually to be found in the dining room from where, it is to be hoped, he keeps an eye on the kitchen.

Grassi's at the Benpres Building

The old, the reliable. Despite the mediocrity of Grassi's café, the pitfalls of which include those annoying lamps directly at eye level, the original at the Benpres Building still delivers the goods. Everything about this restaurant cocoons: the familiar welcome from the maitre d', who remembers everyone, those heavy brown curtains, the thick carpet… The menu could use some updating, and I wish they would serve butter instead of olive oil as the default option; but there is no arguing with the consistency and excellence of the food that emerges from their kitchen. The deep-fried soft-shell crab is always crisp and flavorful, and their dessert list is abbreviated but intelligent.

Cibo, at various malls

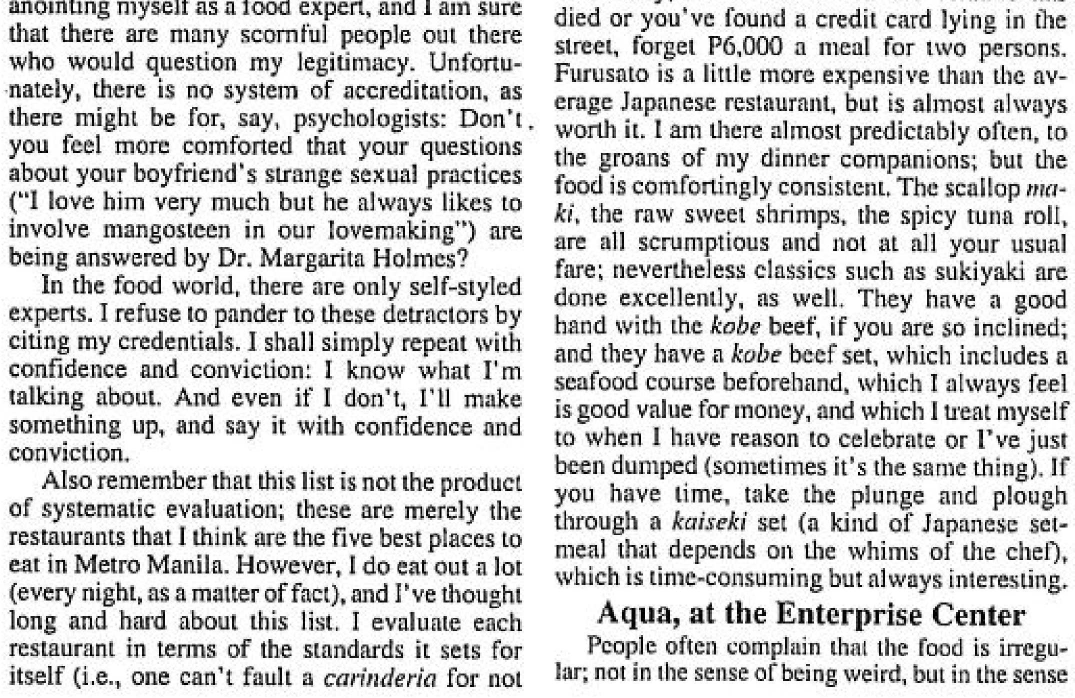
I know it's strange to put this on the list, along with four other restaurants that are more of occasion or celebration restaurants; but then, everyone needs a good café. Or bistro, rather, which function I believe Margarita Fores' establishment serves: a place that you can go to over and over again for classic, simple food. I sometimes wish there were more filling items on the menu than the sandwiches (I'm not a pasta person), but the cooking is always good, and the ingredients are of top quality. I'm particularly attached to the lamb sandwich and the tomato soup; many people I know return for the spinach dip or the salami and goat cheese sandwich. The supply of arugula can be inconstant, so ordering the Insalata Pacifica is a hit-or-miss affair; the addition of that wickedly bitter vegetable makes all the difference. The desserts may be the only weak point; the pastries are sometimes a little sleepy-looking, as though they've been through a hard night of partying. The espresso is genuine Lavazza, though occasionally a little too watered down.

EVERYONE needs a good bistro like Cibo.

Since we have no system of accreditation for food critics, the author anoints himself as one and bravely picks his best bets

I realize that I haven't been entirely positive with these reviews; but the truth is that these restaurants are generally so good that the slightest off-note is highly noticeable. And I do try, at the cost of my popularity at these establishments, to point out what they can do to make the restaurant a little closer to that unattainable, asymptotic goal—being the Perfect Restaurant. As for all those restaurants who believe they should be on this list, there are many explanations, most of which have to do with my idiosyncrasies. This is merely one man's opinion.

E-mail the author at clinton@i-manila.com.ph



OLD Manila at the Pen

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Solid Mills Bldg., dela Rosa St.	687-2198 • 687-2199 Robinsons Equitable Tower, ADB Ave.	410-3709 • 410-3710 Cedar Executive Bldg. Timog Avenue	Sunshine Square Plaza	Citibank-Frabelle Bldg. Alabang-Zapote Rd.	Federal Tower Bldg. Dasmariñas St.	Keppel Centre, Cebu City

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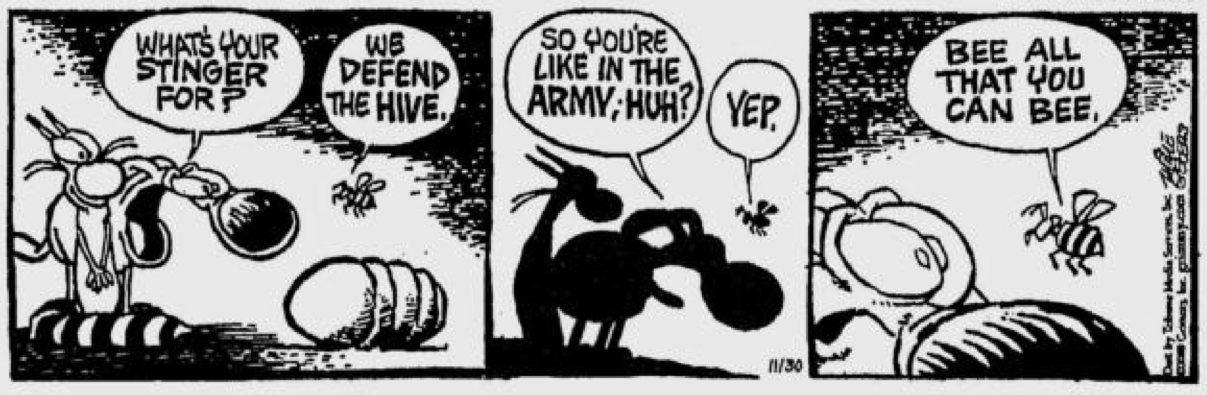
MON. - FRI. (8 AM - 7 PM) / SAT. (8 AM - 5 PM) / SUN. (10 AM - 3 PM)
e-mail add.: fcc@i-manila.com.ph

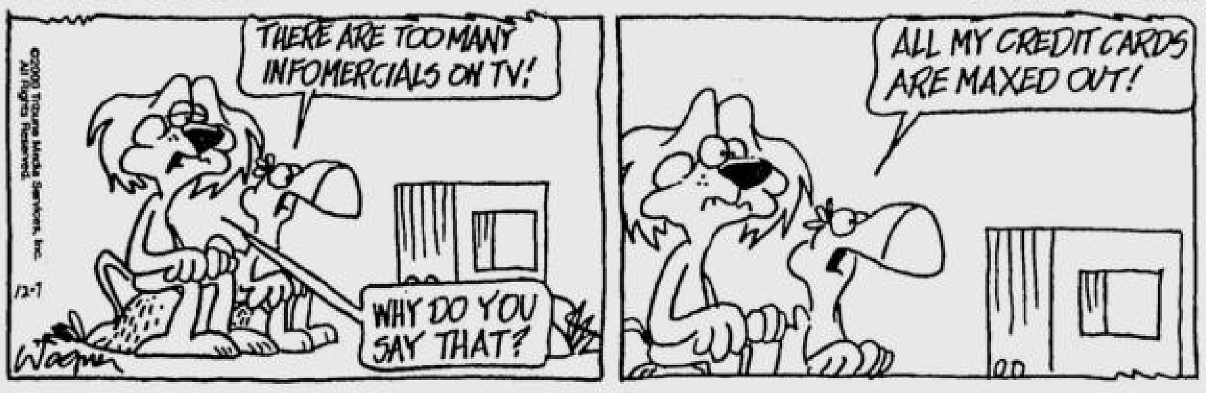
MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS


WHAT'S YOUR STINGER FOR?
WE DEFEND THE HIVE.
SO YOU'RE LIKE IN THE ARMY, HUH?
YEP.
BEE ALL THAT YOU CAN BEE.
11/30

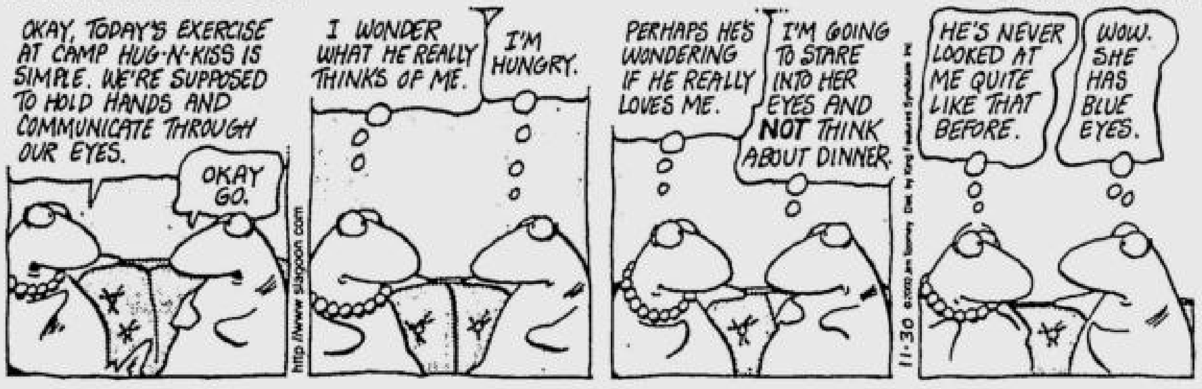
ANIMAL CRACKER

BY FRED WAGNER


THERE ARE TOO MANY INFOMERCIALS ON TV!
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
ALL MY CREDIT CARDS ARE MAXED OUT!
12-7
Wagner

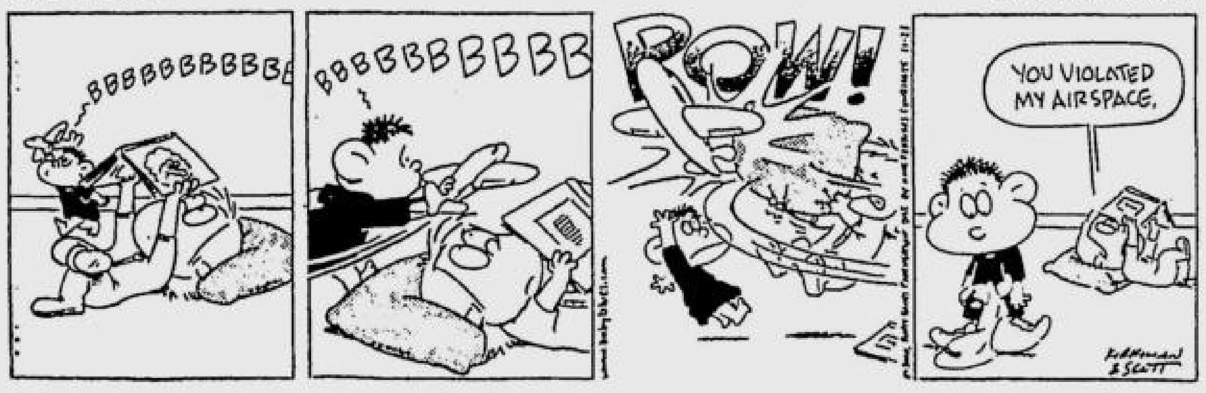
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


OKAY, TODAY'S EXERCISE AT CAMP HUG-N-KISS IS SIMPLE. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO HOLD HANDS AND COMMUNICATE THROUGH OUR EYES.
OKAY GO.
I WONDER WHAT HE REALLY THINKS OF ME.
I'M HUNGRY.
PERHAPS HE'S WONDERING IF HE REALLY LOVES ME.
I'M GOING TO STARE INTO HER EYES AND NOT THINK ABOUT DINNER.
HE'S NEVER LOOKED AT ME QUITE LIKE THAT BEFORE.
WOW. SHE HAS BLUE EYES.
11-30

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


BBBBBBBBBBBB
BBBBBBBBBBB
POW!
YOU VIOLATED MY AIRSPACE.
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Michael Stipe, Lindsay Kennedy, Dyan Cannon, Patty Loveless, Floyd Patterson, . John McLaughlin

Happy Birthday: This is the year to take a strong position of leadership. You have a lot to offer and plenty of wonderful opportunities that will develop through the good deeds you do. Your ability to adapt to changes as they occur will enable you to take advantage of every possibility that comes your way. Your numbers: 9, 17, 22, 25, 31, 36

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Concentrate on getting ahead. Your current position could very well change if you are willing to play the game and push a little harder. Don't neglect your personal partner.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Travel will be enlightening in more ways than one. You will meet new and interesting partners and gain valuable information that could help raise your earning potential.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Female colleagues will be to your advantage. You can rely on them to help you reach your deadline as well as cover up for your mistakes.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Children may be on your mind. Pamper yourself if you have a little extra time.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You may be overpowering today. Don't let others goad you into saying things that you'll regret later. Re-evaluate your own motives, not those of others.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You can help someone who is facing a dilemma that you can relate to. Offer solutions based on your past experiences. A lasting friendship will develop.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Anger will surface if you feel that you have been left with a burden or other people's responsibilities. Try not to waste precious time. Get the work done and learn from the experience.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Your jealous nature may get you into trouble today. Don't let your emotions get in the way of finishing important projects that will affect your professional status.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You may want to look into making some changes in long-term investments or insurance policies that you have had for a long time.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Your partner may be eager to fly off the handle today. Don't forget something that he or she may consider very important. Passion will follow if you have been attentive.

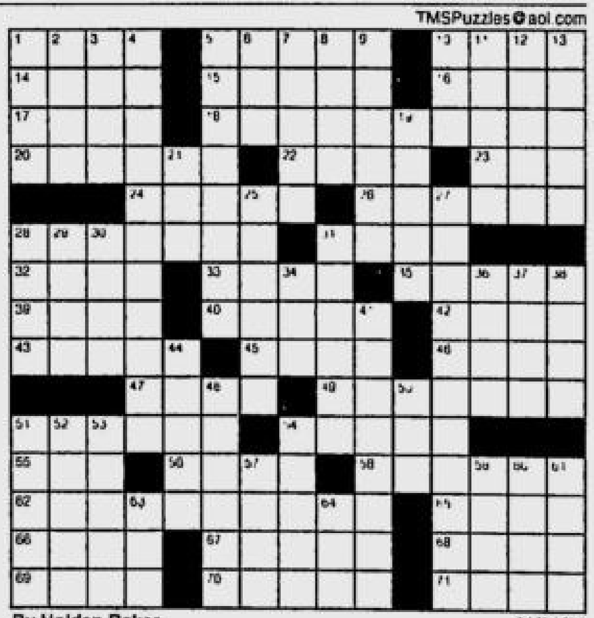
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You may not be too considerate today. Depression about your own situation may cloud your reaction to other people's problems. Try to separate your personal and professional feelings.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Children may be an issue today. You can help with their problems or work but don't do everything for them. Your sensitive nature may be costly if you don't use a firm hand.

Birthday Baby: You have a unique approach to life. You are original, ambitious and conscientious. You will lend a hand without asking questions. You are dedicated and loyal and can be taken for granted.

DAILY CROSSWORD

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Holden Baker
Greenfield, MA
11/21/00

ACROSS
1 Lobster pot
5 Bumped, as the bid
10 Gun or phone on stage
14 Invisible emanation
15 __ prosequi
16 Dracula Lugosi
17 Exploiter
18 Nautical knowledge
20 Last six lines of a sonnet
22 Taboo
23 __ been had!
24 Scandinavian
26 Homesteader
28 Begins again
31 Afterbath powder
32 Last of a teen?
33 "The Face is Familiar" poet
35 Transparently thin
39 Word with prayer and throw
40 Husband-to-be
42 Nabisco cookie
43 Anti-Puritan satirist
45 Fragrant gum
46 Capri cash
47 Lowest parts of small intestines
49 Beatles' Rigby
51 Millinery accessory
54 Daisylike flower
55 Reverence
56 Flightless birds
58 Demand
62 Gray shade
65 Hearty partner?
66 Mesabi range output
67 Aroma
68 Borodin's "Prince __"
69 Tepee or yurt
70 Panky's partner
71 Haiku or ode

DOWN
1 Greek crosses
2 Ploy
3 Bellicose deity
4 Business tie?
5 Deprived of composure
6 "William Wilson" writer
7 Carpentry tool
8 Patron saint of sailors
9 Actress Durbin
10 Network of "Frontline"
11 Swat again
12 Popeye's Ms. Oyl
13 School report
19 Carols
21 Greek Aurora
25 Laconian city
27 Knowledge
28 Mountain lake
29 Water of Mexico
30 Beer barrels
31 Oar holders
34 Jack of "Barney Miller"
36 Poet's Ireland
37 Architect Saarinen
38 Laugh loudly
41 Be fruitful
44 Architect Saarinen
48 Entangle
50 Keatsian twilight
51 Sister's clothes?
52 Conscious
53 Grand __ National Park
54 Pallid
57 West Point sch.
59 Othello's foe
60 Gin flavor
61 Period in office
63 Blowup letters?
64 Sort or kind

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

M	A	R	Y	■	A	T	O	L	L	■	H	U	S	H
A	G	E	E	■	R	A	D	I	O	■	A	S	I	A
J	O	L	L	Y	G	R	E	E	N	G	I	A	N	T
■	■	■	L	O	O	T	■	S	E	E	R	■	■	■
A	M	P	■	U	S	S	R	■	L	E	S	S	E	E
L	E	E	W	A	Y	■	E	P	I	S	T	L	E	S
E	R	R	O	L	■	B	O	L	E	■	Y	O	R	E
■	■	C	O	L	O	R	P	U	R	P	L	E	■	■
A	C	E	D	■	V	I	E	S	■	R	E	G	A	L
L	U	N	C	H	E	O	N	■	P	O	S	I	N	G
A	R	T	H	U	R	■	S	P	A	S	■	N	E	E
■	■	■	U	L	A	N	■	E	Y	E	S	■	■	■
C	L	O	C	K	W	O	R	K	O	R	A	N	G	E
H	A	W	K	■	E	M	A	I	L	■	N	I	N	A
I	D	E	S	■	S	E	N	N	A	■	S	L	U	R

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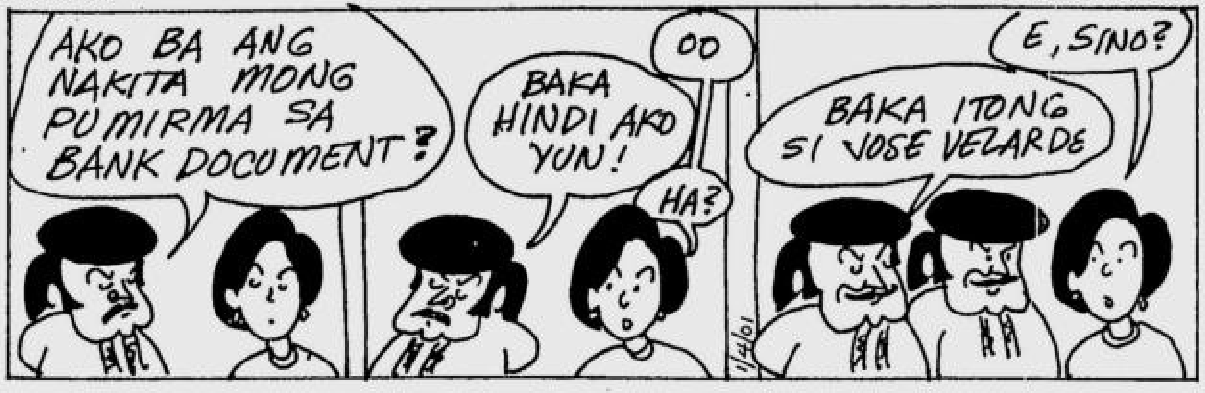
11/21/00

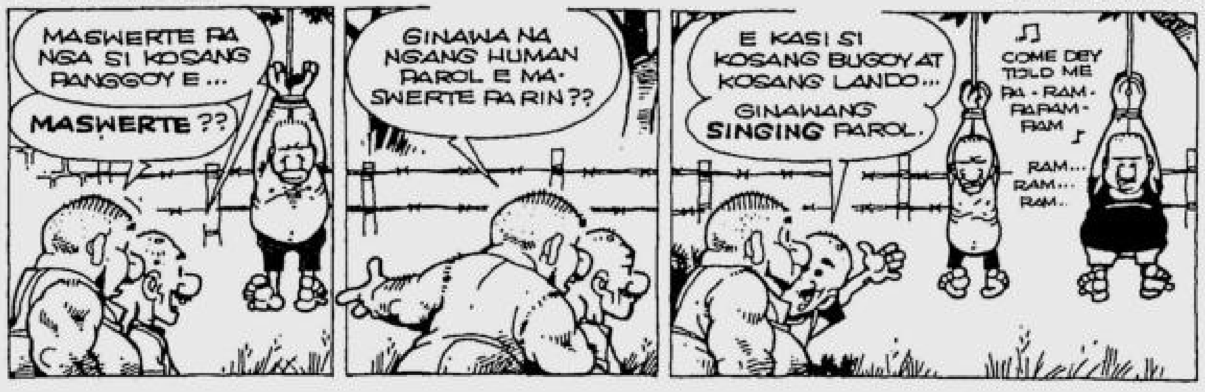
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


AKO BA ANG NAKITA MONG PUMIRMA SA BANK DOCUMENT?
BAKA HINDI AKO YUN!
OO
HA?
BAKA ITONG SI JOSE VELARDE
E, SINO?
1/4/01

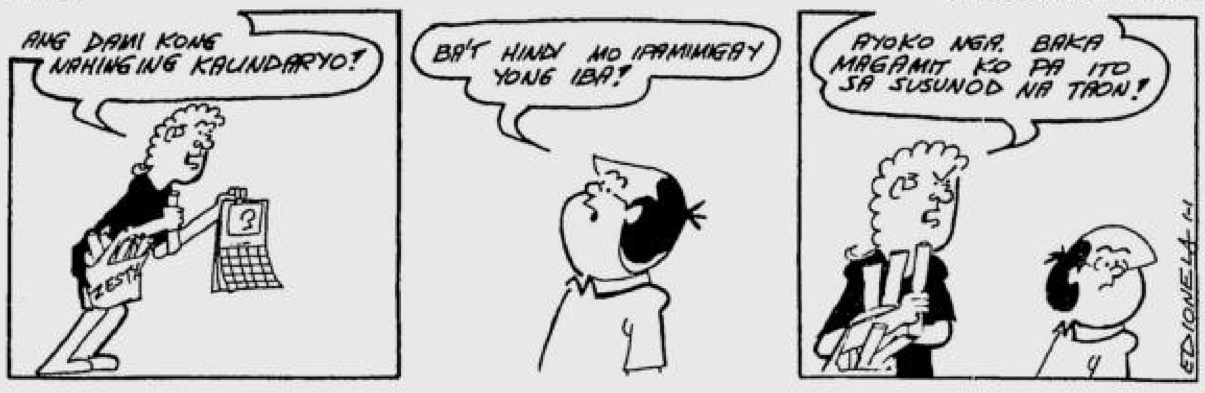
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MASWERTE PA NGA SI KOSANG PANGGOY E...
MASWERTE??
GINAWA NA NGANG HUMAN PAROL E MA-SWERTE PA RIN??
E KASI SI KOSANG BUGOY AT KOSANG LANDO...
GINAWANG SINGING PAROL.
COME DEY TOLD ME PA-RAM-PAPAM-PAM
RAM... RAM... RAM..

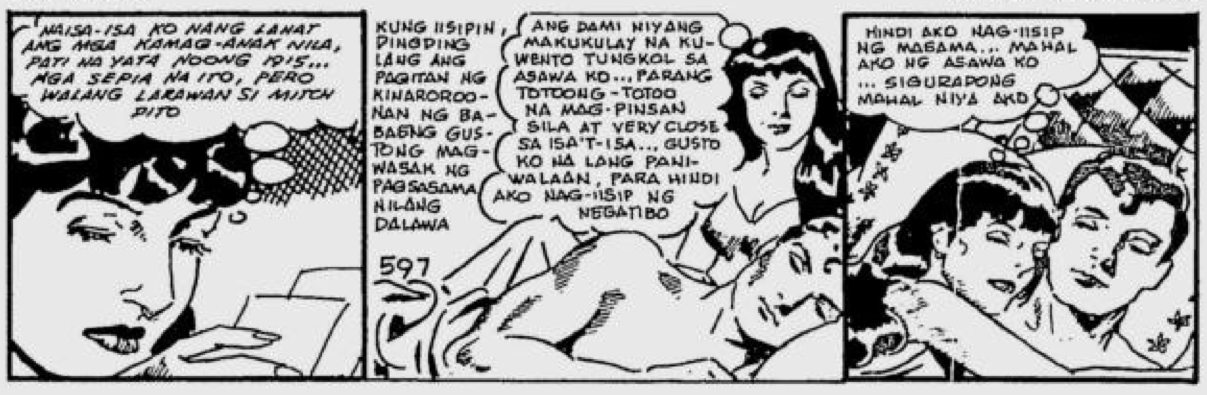
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


ANG DAMI KONG NAHINGING KALENDARYO!
BA'T HINDI MO IPAMIMIGAY YONG IBA?
AYOKO NGA. BAKA MAGAMIT KO PA ITO SA SUSUNOD NA TAON!
EDIONELA

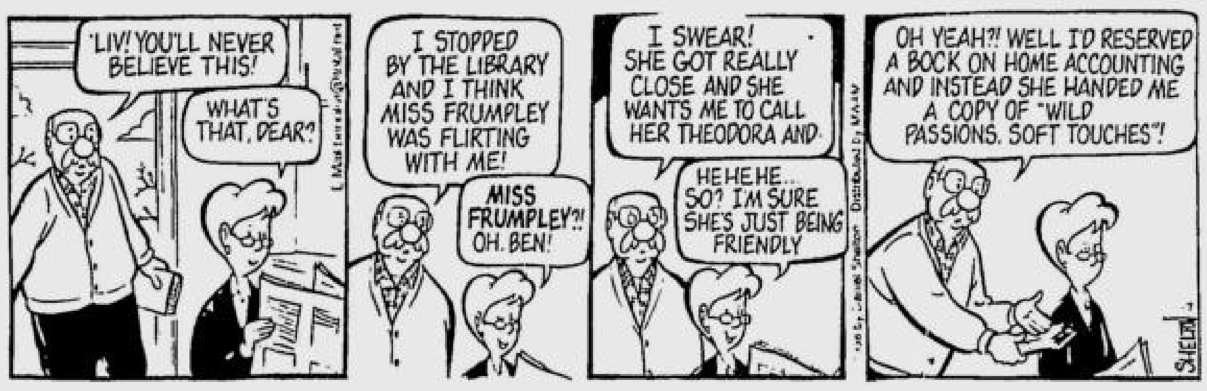
KATREENA

BY JOY CONIENDO


NAISA-ISA KO NANG LAHAT ANG MGA KAMAG-ANAK NILA, PATI NA YATA NOONG 1915... MGA SEPIA NA ITO, PERO WALANG LARAWAN SI MITCH DITO
KUNG IISIPIN, PINDPING LANG ANG PAGITAN NG KINAROROONAN NG BABAENG GUSTONG MAGWASAK NG PAGSASAMA NILANG DALAWA
ANG DAMI NIYANG MAKUKULAY NA KUWENTO TUNGKOL SA ASAWA KO... PARANG TOTOONG-TOTOO NA MAG-PINSAN SILA AT VERY CLOSE SA ISA'T-ISA... GUSTO KO NA LANG PANIWALAAN, PARA HINDI AKO NAG-IISIP NG NEGATIBO
HINDI AKO NAG-IISIP NG MASAMA... MAHAL AKO NG ASAWA KO ... SIGURADONG MAHAL NIYA AKO
597

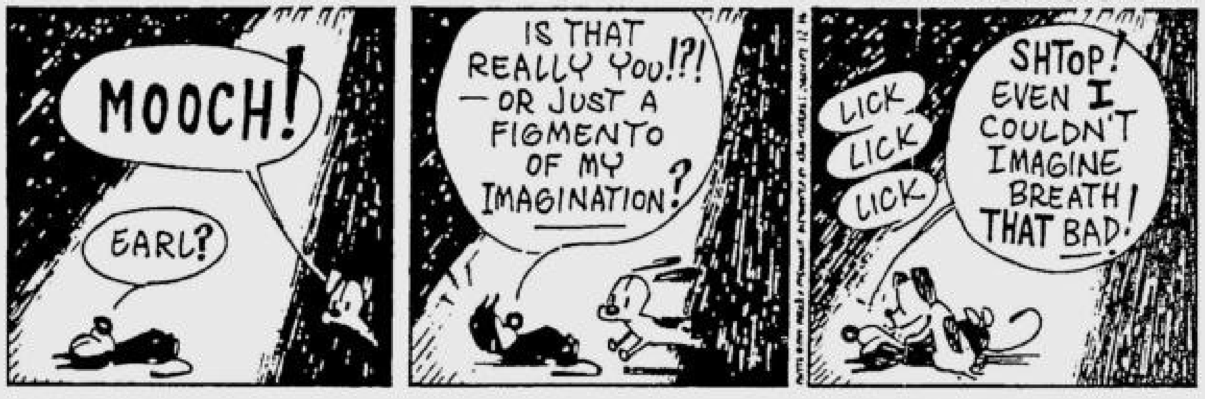
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


'LIV! YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE THIS!
WHAT'S THAT, DEAR?
I STOPPED BY THE LIBRARY AND I THINK MISS FRUMPLEY WAS FLIRTING WITH ME!
MISS FRUMPLEY?! OH, BEN!
I SWEAR! SHE GOT REALLY CLOSE AND SHE WANTS ME TO CALL HER THEODORA AND
HEHEHE... SO? I'M SURE SHE'S JUST BEING FRIENDLY
OH YEAH?! WELL I'D RESERVED A BOOK ON HOME ACCOUNTING AND INSTEAD SHE HANDED ME A COPY OF "WILD PASSIONS, SOFT TOUCHES"!
SHELTON

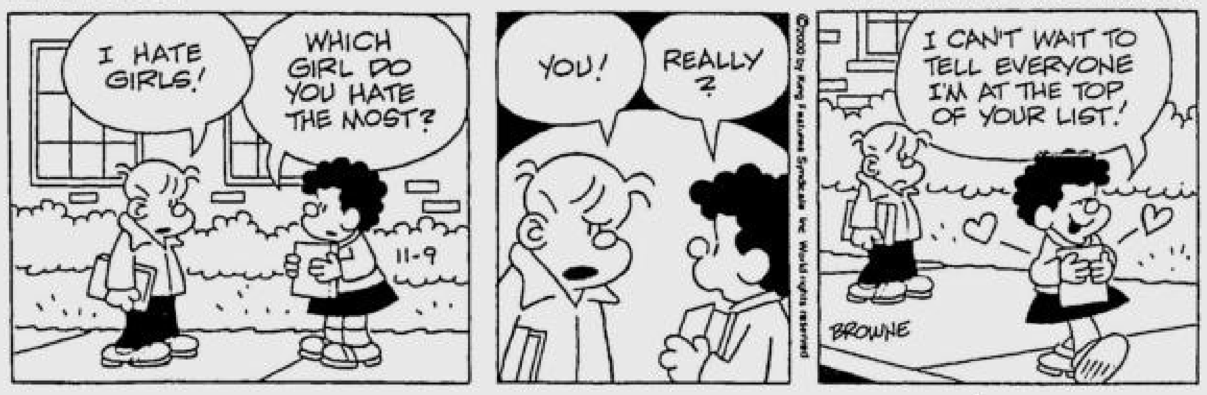
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MOOCH!
EARL?
IS THAT REALLY YOU!?! — OR JUST A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION?
LICK
LICK
LICK
SHTOP! EVEN I COULDN'T IMAGINE BREATH THAT BAD!

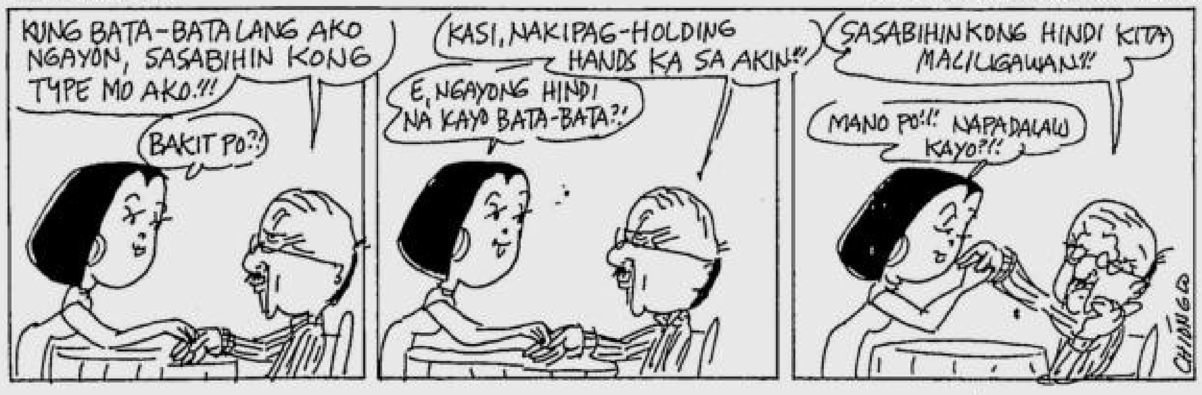
HI AND LOIS

BY BRIAN & GREG WALKER


I HATE GIRLS!
WHICH GIRL DO YOU HATE THE MOST?
11-9
YOU!
REALLY?
I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL EVERYONE I'M AT THE TOP OF YOUR LIST!
BROWNE

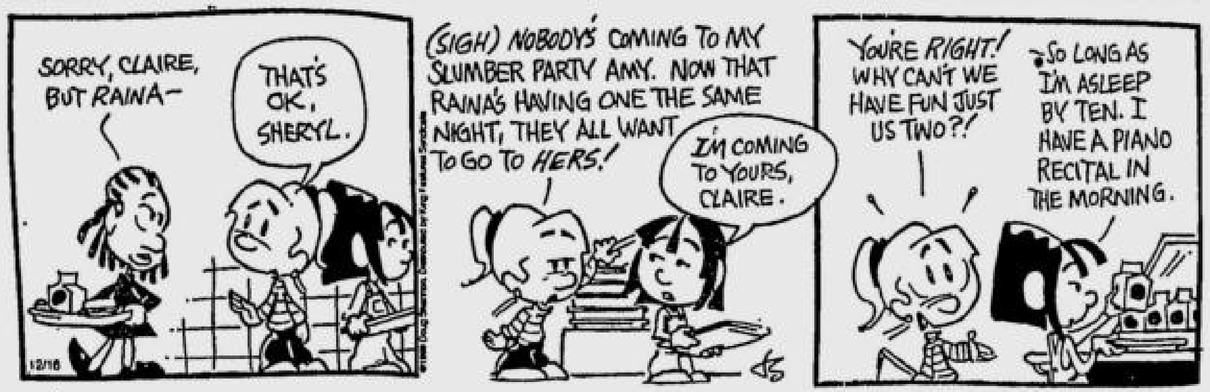
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


KUNG BATA-BATA LANG AKO NGAYON, SASABIHIN KONG TYPE MO AKO?!!
BAKIT PO?!
KASI, NAKIPAG-HOLDING HANDS KA SA AKIN!!
E, NGAYONG HINDI NA KAYO BATA-BATA?!
SASABIHIN KONG HINDI KITA MALILIGAWAN!!
MANO PO!! NAPADALAW KAYO?!!
CHIONGLO

CLAIRE

BY DOUG SHANNON


SORRY, CLAIRE, BUT RAINA—
THAT'S OK, SHERYL.
(SIGH) NOBODY'S COMING TO MY SLUMBER PARTY AMY. NOW THAT RAINA'S HAVING ONE THE SAME NIGHT, THEY ALL WANT TO GO TO HERS!
I'M COMING TO YOURS, CLAIRE.
YOU'RE RIGHT! WHY CAN'T WE HAVE FUN JUST US TWO?!
SO LONG AS I'M ASLEEP BY TEN. I HAVE A PIANO RECITAL IN THE MORNING.
12/18

Basil, baking temperature and 'bibingka'

ASK NORA

Nora V. Daza

RAYMOND Villamor wants, to know how to obtain basil and if he could plant it. He also wants to know about saffron. May I share my own experience with basil?

When Sylvia Cancio and I started with Mai Thai, she had some idle property in Tagaytay. There was a gardener living on the land and we gave him the seeds to plant.

We had three Thai cooks who would cook only if we got them the ingredients they wanted. Well, we managed to get the three kinds of basil.

One is the sweet basil, which is intensely aromatic. This kind of basil has purple flower heads. The second kind is somewhat lemon-scented. The leaves are hairy and the seeds have a kind of sticky surface. The third kind of basil has narrower leaves. This third one does not have as much aroma as the first two. However, when cooked, the aroma is released.

Well, we planted all three types in Sylvia's place in Tagaytay. The first harvest was perfect. The cooks were happy. For about a month or so, we harvested basil twice a week. Then one day the cooks refused to cook.

Why? we asked. "They are not good," we were told. What? we asked uncomprehending. These were from the same plants we had!

Do you know what happened? The bees were responsible for that mix-up. They had cross-pollinated our beloved basil and thus, they were no longer pure. They were mestizos and the Thai cooks refused to use them!

Saffron has a unique and very special aroma. And it is super expensive due to the fact that to obtain a kilo of saffron, one must have the dried stigmas of 200,000 mauve, flowering crocus. Just imagine the work involved. I get my saffron in powder form and it is potent.

One can find saffron at Santi's. They have saffron, thread-like in appearance. It sells at P222 for 2 grams, which is all you need to flavor a *paella* or a bouillabaisse good for six to eight persons.

Oven temperature

Lorie S. Silverio's daughter is taking baking lessons. She states the maximum temperature in their kitchen oven is 250°. How do we go about this?

The Silverios have a kitchen oven that is marked with temperatures in Celsius. The ovens we are used to are marked in Fahrenheit. Our system of cooking and baking is greatly influenced by the one used in the United States. Our measuring cups and spoons are those we adapted from the Americans.

Since, happily, European influences are coming into the Philippines with the Diaspora Filipina, we might as well highlight the positive facets of our colonization by Spain and America. (There is really no other word that I can think of, no matter how one sugar-coats it.) In the globalization of today, we are culturally very rich.

Going back to the use of Celsius and Fahrenheit, we are better off learning both systems. I sincerely believe that knowledge is never wasted. This will allow us to cook and bake in any part of the world.

In the US, where Fahrenheit is used, 225° is equivalent to 110°C. These are temperatures you use when you want to make crisp, dry meringue. You use a slow oven. Say you have excess egg whites from making *ensaimadas* or *leche flan*, you can use the egg whites to make meringue. If your oven is marked by numbers, this is equivalent to No. 1. No. 2 is 300°F (150°C). No. 3-4 is 325-350°F or 170-180°C (slow to moderate). No. 7-8 is 425-450°F or 220-230°C (hot). This kind of temperature may be used to brown and seal a roast. But then, the heat has to be turned down to roast further. This heat is to sear the outside surface of a roast, get the color you want and then continue roasting. I sometimes use aluminum foil to finish the roast.

I have worked with ovens using different indicators of temperature. In the final analysis, one must learn to adjust to the oven. An oven thermometer is useful. The best oven thermometers are accurate, of course, and those that can be read with the oven door closed, meaning, the thermometer is seen through the glass window of the oven.

Then, there is the ability to put your hand in the oven and calculate through that brief moment your hand is in the oven how hot it really is. I believe professional bakers do that.

Rice cake

A reader in the US wants to know how to explain just what Crema de Frutás and *bibingka* are. Note that I wrote Crema de *Frutas*, which means we use more than one kind of fruit, usually from a can of fruit cocktail. I suggest that the name that describes this cake best is Custard Cake with Fruits.

As for *bibingka*, I believe that calling it a Philippine rice cake would be an apt description. I say this for *bibingka* seems uniquely Philippine. I imagine that similar rice cakes exist in other countries in Asia, but ours use butter and cheese.

Our cuisine really explains our cultural heritage. Remember the Brunn Butter? And the *queso de bola*? These are popular among Filipinos so that one finds this relic of our past cooking in today's supermarkets. Can someone tell me if there are similar rice cakes in other countries in Asia? It would be nice to know.

Helpful reader

Dennis has been a helpful reader. When he read that I had not learned to download the e-mails sent to me in Manila when I was abroad, he kindly e-mailed me the procedure. I imagine this is the same Dennis who commented that the sauce for *paalat* was *matamis*. I had too much sugar in the recipe of my *paalat*. Then, I mentioned that one needed a certain amount of liquid and said milliliter and he e-mailed me to show me that I probably meant centiliters.

I would like to tell you, my readers, that I enjoy this exchange of information.

E-mail Nora at ngdev@info.com.ph or write her at PDI, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo, Makati City

Q&A
#6

Do all participating establishments give discounts?

There are some participating establishments that offer gifts or premium items instead of discounts. You can refer to the Store List provided in your Welcome Kit so you know what the offers are in the 700 plus participating stores. Whether these participating stores give out discounts or gifts, your purchase can still earn points.

DISCOUNT PLUS HOTLINE 752-7324 to 25

parent trapped
ms. merit answers

Help your Child Set New Goals for the New Year

Set goals, with, not for, your child. Then focus on one at a time. Start with a goal that your child is guaranteed to achieve. That will make the others more appealing and continued success more likely. Depending on your child's weaknesses and assets, there are many needs and goals to be met - physical, character development, academic, a task or project.

First, you have to write it down in a planner, or a whiteboard. Plan with your child actions to fulfill the goal. Plot down progress. Both of you have to expect progress. We all respond to the expectations other people have of us. If your expectations are low, your child's achievements are likely to match them. If your expectations are high but not unreasonable, your child will respond in kind. If the goal is a finished project or a task or weight loss, try to come up with a time frame.

Make your child aware of his or her improvement. Reward achievement. Don't pay for every accomplishment with a treat or promise. Often it's enough simply to say, "You did a really good job on being punctual. I'm proud of you." But if your child works especially hard on a challenging assignment and completes it successfully, that's worth celebrating. Praise generously, yet honestly.

But when your child did not do as well as you would like. Try encouragement and reassurance and start all over again. This positive attitude says more about not giving up than all the lectures about not giving up can say.

My new year's resolution this year as a parent is helping build my children's character. And I think the task of setting goals, initiating progress is as much my work as my children's. Good Luck and All the Best.

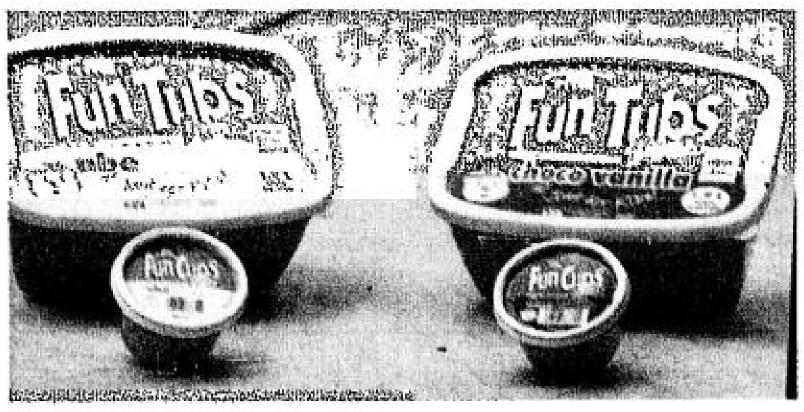
Please send your questions to merit paper products, parent trapped, 88 Samson Road, cor MPL Road, Sucat, Muntinlupa City, or fax us at 02.842.1626. ADVT.

Q How does The Inquirer protect small fry?

Lastimoso to
5 cronies found keeping $100M in Swiss banks
Use of children by MILF assailed

A We keep an eye on the big fish.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
News that makes a difference

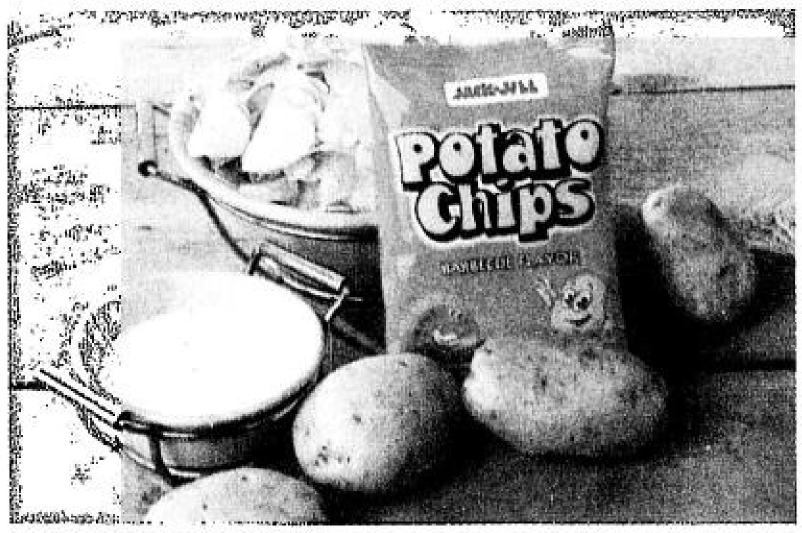


DOUBLE TREATS

Kids can now enjoy two of the four well-loved kiddie flavors—chocolate, vanilla, *ube* and *queso*—in one tub with Presto-Tivoli Fun Tubs Duets: Ube Queso and Choco Vanilla flavors. Presto-Tivoli Fun Tubs Duets retain the same colorful, easy-to-open, no-slip-grip packaging that has always been appealing to kids. Moms will also appreciate Fun Tubs Duets' packaging as they are sturdy, stackable, freezer space-saving and reusable. Presto-Tivoli Fun Duets come in 1.9 liter or half-gallon tubs, perfect for *merienda* or get-togethers with family and friends, and 100 ml Fun Cups Duets that are sure-fire hits with ice cream lovers.

PREFERRED JUICE DRINKS

Del Monte Four Seasons and Guyabano, the two new and exciting juice drink flavors from Del Monte, recently scored high on acceptability and taste preference in a large-scale consumer test. Del Monte Four Seasons is a delightful blend of mango, orange, pineapple and guava—the only one of its kind in the market today. And Del Monte Sweetened Guyabano is a refreshing treat that is sure to be everybody's new favorite. These two healthy drinks are available in 46 oz and convenient take-away 202 cans.



HEALTHY SNACK

Many people believe that snack foods are artificially processed and unhealthy, containing little or no nutritional value. Jack n' Jill Potato Chips is an exception to this misconception. What most people do not know is that Jack n' Jill Potato Chips are a good source of Vitamin C and are cooked the same way moms make homemade potato chips. Jack n' Jill makes it a priority to choose the right, high-quality, all-natural ingredients for its chips, such as the so-called "white potatoes." These are ideal, principal ingredients for making potato chips.

CHUNKIER

Under Selecta's Supreme ice cream category, the newest home treats are Chocolate Chip Cookies and Fruit Salad. The former has chunks of richer and chewier chocolate chip cookies laced with thick chocolate ripple in creamy vanilla. Fruit Salad contains fresh fiesta fruit cocktail chunks in creamy milk ice cream. Selecta's Supreme flavors have larger and three times more chunks. The new flavors also have the right sweetness, which Selecta ice cream is known for. Now available at all Selecta outlets.

Breakfast made right

SHOPPING LIST

POST Breakfast Cereals are now available in the Philippines, providing the Filipino family with an alternative breakfast choice that is not only nutritious but delicious as well.

CW Post made the first batch of Postum, a cereal beverage, in a little white barn in battle Creek Michigan. When he died in 1914, the Postum Cereal Company followed the formula for success that he had established: selling high-quality, nutritious cereal products that appealed to the common men and women.

In 1922, eight years after the death of C.W. Post, Post 40% Bran Flakes was introduced. From 1925 to 1929, Postum acquired over a dozen companies and expanded its product line to more than 60 products. The name of the parent corporation was changed to General Foods Corp. Many more nutritious and delicious food products were introduced under the General Foods Corp. name over the next 60 years.

In 1989, Kraft Inc. and General Foods Corp. were combined to form Kraft General Foods, the largest food company in the US. It underwent a reorganization under one operating company-Kraft Foods Inc. in 1997. Come June 1997, Post marked its 100th year of making great cereals for families everywhere.

Now Filipinos can greet their mornings with a healthy, hearty meal that is low in fat and high in fiber.

THE SAME Post cereals served to generations of Americans are now locally available.

CREATIVE COOKERY. Savor the exquisite taste of Filipino cooking with Part 2 of the Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce "Recipes of the Island" cookbook titled "Creative Cookery." Enjoy fun and easy creative cooking with nine different recipes from all over the Philippines. From *hipong lasenggo* to *sisig* to pickled fish with grilled pork exclusively created by culinary expert Eugene Raymundo for Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce. "Creative Cookery" comes free with any bottle size of Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce.

NEW PRODUCT. A unique product in the market has been discovered, a cup noodle that is not a soup meal—Nissin's Yakisoba. It's the only stir-fried noodle in the market. And it is totally different from the *pancit canton* type. The smell and taste comes close to a delicious bowl of ramen from a Japanese restaurant. The Nissin's Yakisoba is only a quick solution to hunger.

SCOOP IT UP!

For those who can't get enough of delicious, al dente pasta, "scoop" it up with special pasta scoopers from San Remo, makers of 100 percent durum wheat-based pasta products. They will be giving away the pasta scoopers for every two 500-gram pack of fettuccine, spaghetti or angel hair. This offer is available in supermarkets and groceries near you.

Pork Hamonado callos
menudo chicken pastel Pata Tim
Crispy Pata
fried rice Brazo
lengua estofado
Lechon

Party's over.
Time to clean up.

Nestlé
nesVita
Natural Cereal Drink
FIBER RICH

Sweep away the harmful build-up
inside the body with nature's broom: **Fiber.**
After the holiday binge, drink delicious **Nesvita.**
High in Fiber. Good for Health.